

# HIGH HURDLES

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JOSEPH HUSBAND



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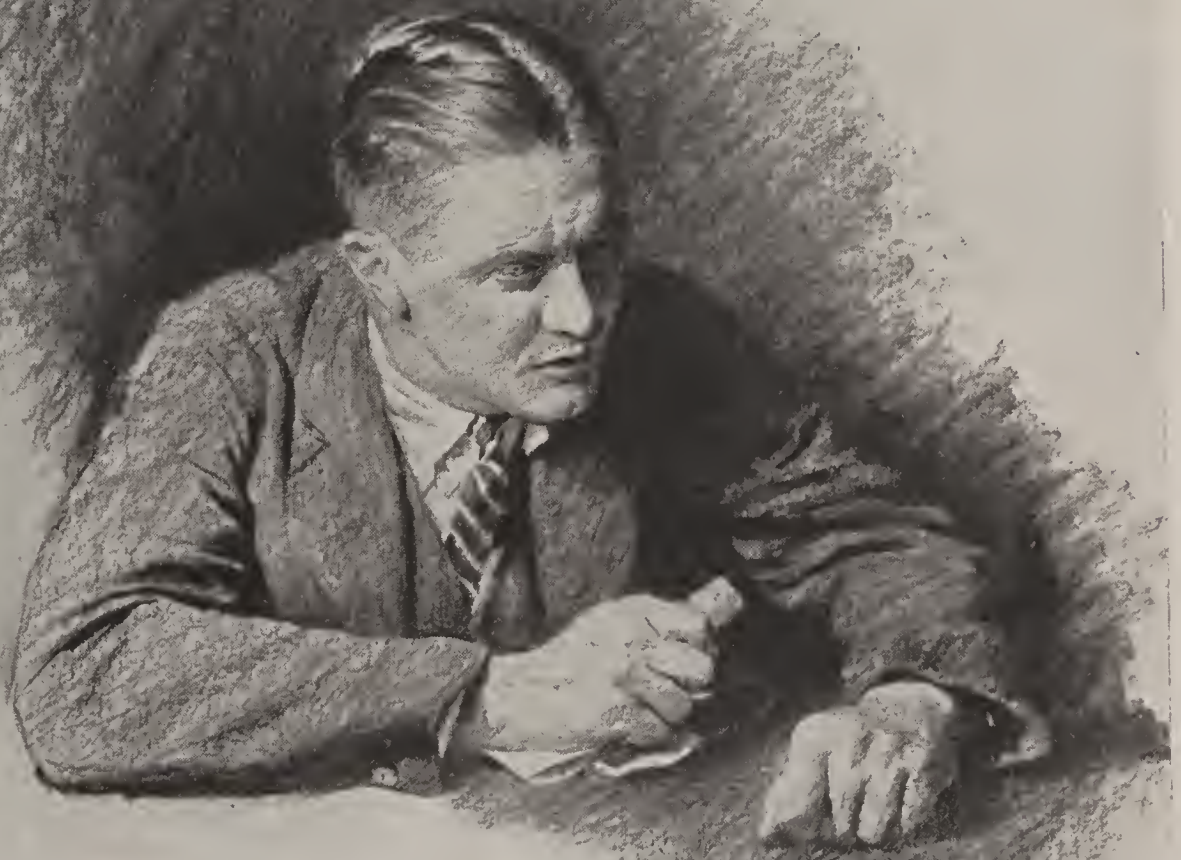
## HIGH HURDLES



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By JOSEPH  
HUSBAND

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# HIGH HURDLES

## I

FROM the open window Harry Gray watched a white cloud mount slowly above the blue slate roof of the opposing wing of Randolph Hall and climb smoothly into the weak blue autumnal sky. It was Indian summer, there was a mellow warmth in the pale sunshine, and the air was redolent with the pungent aroma of burning leaves. Like a languid animal he sprawled on the green cushion of the window seat, an open volume of De Maupassant inverted rooflike on his knee. Down in the courtyard a half dozen men with notebooks under their arms walked slowly down the path which edged the central plot of lawn. They were sophomores, and as they paused for a brief moment before one of the entrances around the little quadrangle, one — a pleasant-faced lad with a dilapidated felt hat pulled down over his narrow face — glanced up at the windows of the dormitory.



“’Lo, Harry!” he called as his eyes and Gray’s met. “Getting in some licks for the hour exams?”

Gray half lifted himself from the cushion and rested his elbows on the stone window ledge. “Going in town to-night,” he answered. “Come on up; I’m not doing anything.” The other nodded, and Gray slowly climbed down from the window seat. Across the room another broad window gave a sense of spaciousness to the apartment and looked down on the gray shingled roofs of a row of ancient houses that lined the east side of Dunster Street. Between the opposing windows a large table half filled the center of the room. A fireplace, the brick soot-blackened by countless wood fires, jutted slightly from the center of the south wall; on either side of it were well-filled bookcases, and, to the right and the left of these, half-opened doors disclosed the bedrooms of Gray and his room-mate. The woodwork was a dark dull oak, and the walls, where they might be seen between the frames of innumerable English sporting prints, were covered with a deep green fabric.

There was a sound of feet on the circular

stairway as Gray walked over to the table and shuffled among the piles of books and magazines for a cigarette box. He was tall, with a big-boned frame, as was attested by his large hands, but in the long, lean fingers there was an indication of another attribute that was also evident in the broad, high forehead and the almost sensitive droop of the corners of his mouth. His eyes were very blue and wide, set beneath pale yellow eyebrows.

In character with that inherited refinement which his hands would seem to indicate, the dark tweed suit hung loosely, but with perfect regard for the rangy body beneath; from the soft white collar of his tennis shirt a tawny necktie struck the single note of color. Son of Phelps Gray and grandson of Leander Gray, he bore in every line of his body and in every movement that unconscious and unassertive assurance that was the heritage of a long line of generations of New England ancestors born to the purple, and in their own eyes the rightful inheritors of all the best which life affords.

The door was flung open and the youth of the dilapidated hat came into the room. With a careless lunge he flung his books on the table

and stretched out luxuriously on the window seat. "What did you say about town tonight?" he asked. "Show?"

Harry lit a cigarette and regarded him for a moment. "I shouldn't smoke, I suppose, training and all that sort of rot. Show? Sure! I'm getting fearfully bored with this existence I'm leading. Let's have dinner in town and take in a show in the evening."

The youth on the window seat idly fingered the pages of the French novel, an English translation in the rich binding of a subscription edition. "All right; I'll get the tickets. But why all this training, Harry? Can't see for the life of me what you see in football." He became serious as he continued, convincing himself of the strength of his argument. "You go down there every afternoon and roll in the mud, and where does it get you? You got kicked off the freshman squad. Hope you don't think you're going to get your 'H' and become Harvard's star athlete."

Gray flicked his cigarette ash on the rug. "Don't be an ass, Stuyve. Just because you're obviously unfit doesn't let me out. I hate the whole business, but what can I do? You didn't

have a father who played center rush and has never forgotten it; you didn't happen to inherit this superb build which is mine own. There's Crosby; what do you suppose he'd say if I quit? I suppose I'll make a dub and all that sort of thing, anyway, but it would look rotten if I didn't appear to try for something, even though I know I won't make a team and wouldn't want to if I could."

Stuyvesant Baring nodded assent. "You're right enough, Harry," he commented. "Guess that's the handicap of coming from a good school; you are expected to perform and shine at something. Gray must do his duty! You ought to be a product of governess, tutors, and Switzerland, like me, then you could make or mar your own destiny, and no one would give a rap about it. How you coming out on your exams?"

"I'm tutoring at the Widow's; guess that will pull me through."

The distant clanging of a bell came in through the window, a persistent note that rose above the grinding bass of the trolleys on Massachusetts Avenue.

"Let's eat!" Baring gathered his books



under his arm. "To-morrow's Saturday; what you doing over Sunday?"

"Going out to Milton for the week-end; the Lockhearts."

Gray slammed the door behind him, and together they clattered down the three flights of stairs. On the path outside the door a short youth with large shell-rimmed spectacles and a ready grin joined them.

"Hello, Felix," was Gray's greeting. "How's the editor?"

Felix appeared not to have heard them. He turned his head slowly. "And how are Damon and Pythias?" he queried. "I must create a social column in the 'Crimson' and engage your contributions. Or would you prefer to write criticisms, or eulogies of musical comedies?"

With a good-natured shove Gray jostled him off the path, then linked an arm through his elbow. "Don't blame us, Felix. What would you have us do? Gather news for your wretched newspaper, or spend our evenings at the Union or Brooks House?"

"Come with us to-night, Felix," Baring broke in; "we'll buy you a nice dinner and take you to a lovely musical comedy that will inspire you for weeks to come."

Felix shook his head decisively. "Flutter away, you gay butterflies; I've some editorials to write and much studying to do. I can't be bothered with your delightful frivolities."

In amiable conversation they swung out through the iron gate and, three abreast, tramped up the narrow street toward the Yard. Through the leafless trees the sun cast their shadows before them as they walked. At the corner of Massachusetts Avenue a massive building of brick and limestone flanked the entrance to Dunster Street, and as they passed its deep-set entrance two men emerged from the doorway.

"I wonder when they'll begin to elect from our class?" said Baring in an undertone. "You ought to hear something pretty early, Harry. Your father's club, wasn't it?"

Gray nodded. "Father was a member and so was Uncle Bill. He isn't actually any relation at all, but he looks after the estate for father, and he's always been a sort of member of the family. I guess that ought to help; family does count, you know."

Felix gave a cynical look at Gray. "You forget that I am a Chapman, Harry — Felix

Chapman of the Chapmans of Waterloo, Iowa.” A smile turned the corner of his mouth. “Perhaps that will make my acceptance into a final club difficult. My father, by the way, never went to college; he was what you might call an agriculturist.”

“You don’t understand, Felix,” Gray retorted. “It isn’t anything really against you if your father was a farmer. Some of the final clubs here have been going on for generations; it’s only natural that fellows whose fathers and uncles have been members should have a preference.”

The elusive smile continued on Chapman’s lips. “Now, Harry, you are trying to tell me that who your father is or was, and what your name may be and where you come from, are the things that count here, and not the man himself. Possibly, in part you may be right, but I’d have a pretty mean opinion of my college if I didn’t believe that it’s the man himself who makes or breaks himself.”

They had paused on the curb. Gray shrugged his shoulders and laughed lightly. “I suppose you’d count being captain of the chess team a higher social qualification than — than — ”



"Than being a Gray of New Bedford," Felix broke in. Then he laughed outright. "Take up chess, Harry; perhaps your ideas may alter a bit. You'll find some mighty interesting fellows prefer chess even to a musical comedy." He waved his hand good-naturedly and plodded across Massachusetts Avenue toward the Yard. Gray and Baring walked slowly down the street.

"Odd chap, Felix," said Harry. "You've got to admit he's bright and all that, but I shouldn't think he'd joke about his father being a farmer. Blood will tell, you know. He rooms in a funny little hole in the top of Stoughton — went up there once to see him about something. Odd chap, Felix."

Baring nodded. "I suppose he'll go through and never make any club, and he'll be just as happy with his editorship on the 'Crimson' and his debating. Well, it's lucky for the 'Crimson' there are enough fellows who like that sort of thing."

The bell in Massachusetts Hall struck up its clangor, and a few minutes later the big iron gateways of the Yard began to discharge their several currents of young manhood into the broad street.

“Well, I’m off to my twelve o’clock. Going down to practice this afternoon?”

Gray nodded.

“Where’ll we meet to-night, Stuyve?” he asked. “Better come up to my room and we’ll go in together.”

“All right, I’ll be with you about six. So long. See you there.”

The sun had set in a cloudless sky, and the yellow west reached up and merged into a vault of flawless blue in which already a few pale stars flickered white and dim. Along Tremont Street the electric lights flooded the sidewalks with a yellow radiance. In the semidarkness beyond the gaunt bare limbs of the trees in the Common rose in a dark tangle, through which here and there the white gleam of an arc light shone steadily. Above the trees lifted the black silhouette of the roofs of Park Street and Beacon Hill.

Gray and Baring walked slowly, their talk now and again interrupted as a congestion of the crowd caused them to swing into single file. At the corner of an intersecting street they edged into a doorway and stood for a minute as in a quiet backwater. Baring plucked his

watch from his pocket. "It's almost seven," he said. "Let's go down to the grill and order dinner. I'm half starved!"

A few minutes later they turned into the comparative darkness of a side street and clattered down a flight of marble steps.

The grill, a long, low-ceilinged room, was warm, and the faint smell of food and flowers hung almost imperceptibly in the air. The head waiter recognized them and led the way across the wide floor to a small table. Shaded lights intensified the whiteness of snowy linen. There was a hum of intermingled voices in the air, and from above, somewhere in the great hotel, came the sound of distant music, the plaintive melody of an operatic medley.

They stretched their legs beneath the table and studied the menu, the head waiter interpolating apologetic suggestions. Baring leaned back in his chair. "Guess that will hold me," he commented.

Harry watched his companion for a moment, his blue eyes intent to observe the effect of what he was about to say. "Do you remember what we were talking about this afternoon — football?" he asked. "Remember how I told you

how much I hated the whole business? Well, I'm through! I got fired off the squad this afternoon."

"You got fired, dropped from the squad?" Baring repeated, a real concern in his small dark eyes. "What happened? What did Crosby say when he fired you?"

For a brief second Gray hesitated for an answer. "Oh, he didn't say much; wasn't time. Said that it was evident I hadn't a chance, so I might as well quit. He suggested, I thought rather sarcastically, that I didn't like football, and the result was I was no good at it. That isn't true, though, of me in particular; half the squad hate it, but they keep on because they have something the team and the coaches can use. I haven't. I haven't the weight or the speed."

"You're lazy," interjected Baring.

"Guess I am. Never was an athlete, though I did make the second team sixth-form year at school. What I didn't quite get, though, was the way Crosby spoke. He seemed to imply something he didn't say. I don't think he likes me, and it's quite mutual."

"Probably doesn't approve of you."



“Doubtless. People don’t usually approve of what they don’t understand. I don’t expect Crosby to understand me or my purpose at college.” Gray leaned forward and traced the pattern in the linen cloth with his fork. “He may be a New Yorker, but who ever heard of him until he came here and took up athletics? I tell you, Stuyve, I’m not after that sort of thing here. ’Course I would like to make the team, but, after all, that’s just one element in these four years.”

“Do you know, Harry, I admire you; it takes poise to see things this way.” Baring speared an oyster and dipped it in the cocktail sauce. For a moment they were both silent, for Harry was reluctant to interrupt a promised analysis of himself that was far from unpleasing, and Baring seemed to be gathering his thoughts for a clearer definition of his statement. “You know, Harry, that Harvard has meant more to you than it has to me; it’s done more for you. My family is nothing to be ashamed of, and I’ve plenty of money when it comes to that, but you know what I mean—clubs and that sort of thing. Why, you’re slated for a place in any final club you want, and an early ten on the

Institute. I suppose I'll tag in somewhere, but that's about all."

"I know, Stuyve. You see, you were tutored and went to school abroad; you didn't come in with a crowd of fellows as I did. Then your family all went to Yale, while I have the background of all my family here before me. Of course the fact that you are a gentleman and the son of a gentleman is bound to be recognized."

"What do you want of Harvard?" Baring broke in.

"What do I want? Why, I don't know. It's just a phase in the life of all the Grays to graduate from Harvard. I suppose I want enough decent marks to get my degree; I want to make the best clubs and have a darned good time for four years. I guess that's about it, as far as I'm concerned. What do you want?"

Baring intently regarded the plate before him. "I want something, Harry. You won't understand because you have it. I want popularity, the kind you could have. I'm not unpopular. I don't mean that, but I do envy the fellows who make teams, and go through the Yard as though they knew every man in

college. I've a few good friends, like you, and I get good marks, but that's about all I'm getting out of it. I'm sort of lost in the crowd."

Harry glanced at him with surprised amusement. "Oh, come, Stuyve, cheer up. You talk like a preacher. I say we make an evening of it. I may as well celebrate my escape from slavery, even if you would like to have me make the team. Do you know a fellow named Schroder, comes from Buffalo or some place out west? Yes, that's his name, Schroder. I met him once at one of those deadly class smokers, and to-day — I doubt if I've seen him since — he slapped me on the back as we were coming out of Sever, and said: 'Hello, Harry.' I don't mean to be overly exclusive, but there's a limit, Stuyve, isn't there?"

"That's just what I mean, Harry: you don't like that sort of thing. But if you don't have a care," Baring warned, "you'll get some of the fellows down on you who really count in things. I'm by nature no more a mixer than you are, but you can't draw off too far. The crowd won't follow. That's what hurts me. I know just a few fellows, and I'd like to know more, only I don't know how. You could know



everybody if you wanted to, and you don't want to."

Harry laughed good-humoredly. "No, I don't," he assented. "When I have a congenial little group of friends, why should I waste time sporting around with Tom, Dick, and Harry, doing a lot of things I don't enjoy, seeing a lot of fellows I don't care for? I suppose that's class spirit. Well, it doesn't interest me." He leaned back in his chair and smiled expansively. Then he nodded his head sharply to the right by way of indication. "'George; but that's a pretty girl over at that table in the corner. Look at her, Stuyve. I wonder who the man is?"

Baring did not reply for a moment. The conversation was exercising a disquieting effect on him. Somehow he realized that Gray was sliding smoothly along life at a tangent, and his obvious good humor and self-satisfaction annoyed him. When he spoke there was seriousness and a tinge of bitterness in his voice.

"Don't you care for anything or anybody, Harry? Gad, but you're self-satisfied. You get fired from the football squad, and when you

ought to be kicking yourself about the Yard for being a quitter, you go in town and stage a celebration. Lord, but you're satisfied to be Harry Gray. I wish I had your build and your ability to get on with people. I'd do something with it."

The first part of Baring's comment had a sting that pierced even the casual veneer with which Gray had overlaid himself, but the little appeal to his vanity in the reference to his personal characteristics relieved him, and his tightened lips relaxed into an indulgent smile. He lifted his glass in mock toast.

"Here's to you, old fossil, perhaps I'd be benefited by some of your seriousness, but remember what old Omar preached. Good stuff, something about sighing for the glories of the world and the world to come; but, after all, the wise chap lives as he goes and takes the cash. I'll be hanged if I'm going to spoil four good play years. Let the future take care of itself."

They reached the theater just before the first act was concluded and found their places, climbing in over the knees of the occupants of the aisle seats. Baring watched the mad and

incoherent fantasy with fixed eyes and unsmiling lips. His thoughts kept reverting to Gray and all his assurance of the future. Somehow he wondered if Gray, the Gray who could be conscious of no wrongdoing, were not riding for a fall. But Gray, oblivious to his friend's perturbation, peacefully watched the stage with tolerant amusement, his smiling lips slightly drawn back from his fine, even teeth. . . .

The moon had risen and gleamed brightly on the slate roofs of the dormitory. In the darkness of the entrance on Mount Auburn Street, Harry groped for his key. Finally the lock responded. They stood for a moment in the open door. Gray flung an arm affectionately across Baring's shoulders. "Don't take it too hard, old top, what I said about myself during dinner. I guess I am pretty optimistic, and I guess things always have been and always will be rather soft for me, but I do think you are a bit hard on me. I'll admit that perhaps I haven't mixed around enough, but I guess that won't affect my life much a dozen years from now."

Baring avoided an answer. "Well, night, night, Harry. Do it again some evening."

Gray walked firmly down the long hall and mounted the winding stairs to his rooms. On the landing on the second floor he paused for a moment while he felt for his room key. Abruptly a door opened and two men stepped out into the dimly lighted stairwell; from the doorway the light of the room shone brightly in his face.

“Good-evening, Gray.” The speaker was a broad, heavy-set man with a curious grace of movement that could be noticed in his extraordinary lightness of step even in the darkness of the hallway.

“Evening, Dixon.” Harry felt a sudden and unaccustomed embarrassment.

The two men clattered down the stairs, and a note of laughter sounded, cut short by the door slammed behind them as they went out into the courtyard.

Slowly he climbed the final flight and turned the key in the lock. Down in the quadrangle of the building some late arrivals raised voices in uncertain song. From an open window somewhere across the court a sleepy voice exhorted freshmen to be seen rather than heard. The lock stuck, and he hammered on the panel.



For a long minute he waited. Then a light glinted through the crack beneath the door, the bolt turned, and a pajama-clad lad with a disheveled shock of curly brown hair regarded him critically.

"Hello, Clarence; sorry to trouble you. Lock's busted again."

The room-mate regarded him dully with sleep-filled eyes, then turned and retreated to his bedroom. Harry picked up a magazine from the table and lighted a cigarette. For a few minutes he tried to read, but his thoughts constantly returned to the incidents of the day. He recalled the look on Crosby's face that afternoon, and he found himself wondering if, after all, there might not be something in Baring's point of view. Finally he undressed slowly and climbed into bed.

It was an hour later than usual the next morning when he arose and closed his bedroom window. Outside a heavy gray mist hung over the roofs and intensified the darkness of a lowering sky. It had been drizzling, and the street and sidewalk were dark with moisture. Altogether, it was a depressing beginning to another day.

He switched on his light and critically regarded himself in the mirror above the fine mahogany lowboy that served him for a bureau. Around the rim of the glass a dozen engraved invitations were stuck haphazard in the frame; the check in the corner of each indicated that all of them had been acknowledged; he was punctilious in his social obligations.

The living room was gloomy, but it was at least warm, and there was a faint pungent aroma in the air, a blend of wood smoke and a freshly lighted cigarette. Clarence's door was open, and the closed window and tumbled bed indicated that he had gone to breakfast and probably to an early recitation. It was his cigarette that Harry smelled; Clarence always smoked while he was dressing. The logs in the fireplace were white and charred from last night's fire. With a heavy brass-handled poker Harry pushed the fragments together. There were a few ruddy sparks, and a bit of newspaper soon incited a blaze. Pulling a big chair with well-worn leather cushions before the fireplace, he stretched his bare feet toward the grateful warmth. With languid interest he observed

his feet; like his hands, they were long and slender; unconsciously he approved of them.

Off in the Yard the college bell announced the hour of nine. He remembered that he had a lecture at ten, one of the several courses in English that truly appealed to him, and he must dress. A cold tub temporarily revived his spirits; the firm resiliency of healthy youth was already reacting on him physically, and he began to slip into his clothes with unexpected alacrity.

While he knotted his tie his eyes scanned the invitations about the mirror. One with his name and the date filled in in large feminine hand requested his presence at dinner on the evening of the twentieth; another card, next to it, was an invitation to a dance on the same evening. He made a hurried calculation and discovered that this was the morning of the twentieth. He hoped that he would feel less depressed by evening.

There were three pictures on the top of the lowboy, two of them large photographs in severe frames of silver, each engraved with a small crest. One of the photographs was of a tall, slender man of perhaps fifty, dressed in a yachting suit. A pointed and slightly drooping mus-



tache partly concealed the likeness of father to son. The other was of his mother, a plump woman of forty with delicately cut features and a slight lift of the eyebrows which gave a touch of superciliousness to her expression. A collar of pearls encircled her well-molded throat. She had died when he was in the second term at boarding school.

The third picture occupied a central location immediately below the mirror. It was a small snapshot of a girl, in a red leather frame. She had evidently been playing tennis, for she held a racket in her hand and a broad ribbon confined to a semblance of order her profusion of dark hair.

Harry's eyes lowered from the invitations to the girl's picture. She too would be dining that evening at the Copleys' and they would all go on together to the dance. The thought refreshed him more than the cold splash in his tub. Even the raindrops spattering against the window assumed a cheerful tone.

With his raincoat collar about his ears he plunged across the damp courtyard and into Massachusetts Avenue to a dairy lunchroom. Perched on a high stool, he consumed his coffee

and eggs in pleasant absorption. With a tinge of relief he realized that he would not have to report as usual at Soldiers' Field for practice that afternoon; he would spend it reading or in some friend's room, and at the close of the day he could prepare himself leisurely for the evening.

As he went out of the door he encountered Jack Dixon on the sidewalk. Vaguely he recalled his meeting with Dixon the night before on the stairway. Undoubtedly Dixon knew that he had been dropped from the squad. It annoyed him that he resented Dixon's knowledge of the incident.

"Hello, Gray; going to be in your room after lunch? I'd like to see you for a few minutes. Something I want to talk over with you."

Harry hesitated, but evasion seemed impossible. "Yes, I'll be in," he answered. "What time?"

"One-thirty?" Harry nodded. "All right. So long," and Dixon sped down the sidewalk, his broad back swaying like a dancer's in motion with his curious swinging step.

During the lecture Harry's thoughts constantly reverted to this appointment. He liked

Dixon, admired him and approved of him, for Dixon was not only one of the class officers, a good scholar, and a versatile athlete, but he came also from a Boston family that Harry respected. Harry wondered if Dixon was to dine at the Copleys' that evening; it was not unlikely, unless it interfered with training.

After class Harry encountered his room-mate in the corridor and together they walked through the Yard back to their rooms. Occasionally Harry wondered why he and Clear roomed together. When Clarence had proposed the union there seemed no valid and ready objection. He liked Clarence, not particularly because he was an agreeable companion, but chiefly because he knew that Clarence was dependable. It was Clarence who paid the bills and it was Clarence who was always at home, interminably reading.

"Hear you got dropped from the squad."

Harry expected the remark. "Yes," he said casually, "just as glad."

"I'm afraid it will hurt you," Clarence continued; "a fellow can't afford to peter out that way. At least you ought to act as if it meant something to you. If there was a good reason, it would be one thing, but everybody knows

you're dropped because you won't make an effort."

"I guess I can weather the storm." He was a little piqued at Clarence's insistence.

"Probably you can, but it won't help you make an early ten on the Institute, or elect you into a club."

Harry pointedly changed the subject and they walked back to the rooms for the most of the way in silence.

Sharp at one-thirty there was a knock at the door. Clarence was out and Harry was glad of his absence. "Come in," he called.

Dixon pushed open the door and sat down on the window seat. "I suppose you are wondering the why for of this formal appointment?"

"I'll admit you have me in the dark."

Dixon slid his legs off the bench and straightened up as though he wished to emphasize the seriousness of what he was about to say.

"Well, Gray, it's just this. Take it, please, as a friendly effort on my part. Really, it isn't a pleasant one. Now, here's what I want to say to you. You got fired off the squad yesterday. You got fired because you are lazy and you weren't working. It's a bad thing for you, and



it's a bad thing for Harvard when a chap with your physique and training simply washes out. It isn't every fellow, Gray, who has your build. That's why it's bad when you get dropped. It isn't your body that can't play football, or your mind; it's you who won't. Gray, this is just a friendly suggestion, but if I were you I'd try to play the game here a little different. Some of the fellows will say hard things about you. You can't afford it. No one can."

For a minute neither spoke, then Harry lifted his eyes from the burning logs in the fireplace. "I get your point, Dixon, thanks for bothering, but you don't understand. I'm willing enough to play football, but I admit I don't like it; that isn't what I enjoy here."

"Are you simply here for the fun of the thing?" asked Dixon.

"Well, yes and no. I want a degree and that sort of thing, but it's more than that to me. I enjoy certain friendships here: Stuyve Baring's, for instance. I enjoy the social side of it: things in Boston, dinners and dances. I'd like to shine in athletics, but I can't for the life of me see why some of you fellows get so all-fired serious over it. When I graduate I hope to take a couple



of years in the Law School — every man should know enough law to handle his own affairs — then I probably will go into business. My uncle has suggested cotton brokerage. I think I'll give it a try, at least. Honestly, I can't see why there's all this fuss about whether or not I care if I am dropped from a football squad. What does that have to do with these other things?"

Dixon watched him intently while he spoke. "Gray," he said, "you are like a lot of fellows who go through here and don't do any real good or harm, just miss all the best of it. Harvard's too big to force a fellow along a path; it gives him a fair start, but if he doesn't see the way it leaves him to work it out for himself. All I want to say is that you're too good a fellow to hang off this way. Mix up more in class activities; don't be so darned exclusive; get into the life of the place."

He got up and edged toward the door. "Please pardon my butting in this way, but I've got this place at heart and I want to see you a factor in it."

Harry walked with him to the door. "Thanks, Dixon, very decent of you to do this. I'll try to get into things occasionally. So long."

The door closed and he walked back to his chair by the fire. Dixon's admonition annoyed him, perhaps because in the few friendly words he recognized an unassailable truth; perhaps because it offended his pride that anyone should criticize him.

Suddenly the afternoon ahead of him seemed a long and barren period of inaction. Up to now football had occupied him. Well, that evening he was dining in town at the Copleys'. There was a dance later and he would see Ellen Davenport. The thought reassured him.

He put on his hat and walked over to Baring's room, but Baring was out. Slowly he crossed the Yard. The worn pine stairs of Stoughton creaked beneath his feet as he climbed the two flights which led to Felix Chapman's room. A voice answered his rap, and he turned the knob. Felix was standing beside one of the deep-set windows, hat on and a book in his hand.

"Just off to a lecture," he announced. "Sit down and make yourself at home. I've got to go over to the Crimson after my lecture, but stick around and toast your toes; good books on the table." He hurried off busily and Harry relaxed in a Morris chair in front of the fireplace

with a book plucked from the heterogeneous pile on the table.

Day faded and Harry laid aside the volume and for a long half hour watched the sparkling embers in the dying fire. Then he looked at his watch; it was half past five. The air was still and frosty and lighted windows glowed with a warm yellow light as he crossed the Yard. On the other side of Massachusetts Avenue he turned into Leavitt's for a package of cigarettes. In the back room a crowd of men moved about the pool tables; there was a hum of voices and the occasional sharp click of the colliding balls.

As he turned to leave he abruptly faced a tall, dark man who leaned on the cigar counter, watching the players. With a sweep of his eye Harry marked the unshapely gray suit and frayed four-in-hand tie, but beneath the careless dress he could not but notice the long lean lines of a body alive with the unconscious grace of an athlete in the pink of training. It was Arthur Clark, a classmate whom Harry had known chiefly as a member of the football squad. Clark, Harry had been told, came from some Western town; Des Moines, he remembered. During his freshman year he made few acquaintances, but

he won his numerals on the freshman football team and when spring came he showed an ability on the diamond that brought him rapidly to the fore. And in the past few months he had become a talked-of candidate for the varsity team.

The dark eyes of the Westerner met Harry's with a cold, appraising penetration. "Hello, Gray; didn't see you on the field to-day. Sick?"

Harry colored and became as suddenly indignant at this obvious betrayal of his self-consciousness. "No, I'm not sick." He did not want to grant the man an answer, but the dark eyes followed him and drew the words from him. "I've quit football," he added.

"I don't see exactly why you quit." There was something irritating in Clark's calm voice. "You always looked like good material."

"Perhaps you don't. I can't see why I should explain my actions to every casual acquaintance." Harry had not meant to answer so sharply, but Clark's questioning irritated him.

"Admitting I'm a casual acquaintance; there's a sort of sense of responsibility around here that perhaps prompts me to observe that your preferences aren't the only things you ought to consider."



"I'll thank you to mind your own business."

The dark eyes still calmly regarded him; there was no movement in the slouched body that leaned against the cigar case. "My business now is Harvard's business," Clark answered slowly. "I don't think we can let fellows like you quit their responsibilities without comment."

"Do you mean to call me a quitter?" Harry shot back.

"Yes."



## II

FOR a second Harry felt his arm tense for a blow. Hotly the blood surged through him. Then he turned and walked out of the store, his head high with the indignation that momentarily obsessed him. The cold evening air was like a sudden awakening. "Quitter!" he muttered. "I should have hit him." His mind pictured the brawl in the crowded store, then interference, and the humiliation of explanation. He did not consider the immediate outcome, it was the publicity that appalled him; and, he realized, the dark, steady eyes of Clark had browbeaten him. A sense of shame overwhelmed him.

Instinctively he quickened his step. In the eyes of a man whom he considered his inferior, he had lowered himself. "I'll even up with him."

Clarence was out and Harry was glad to be alone while he dressed. From the frame on the bureau the face of his father regarded him, dispassionate, confident, self-satisfied. His eyes wandered to his mother's picture. There too

was the same expression about the eyes and mouth. Almost childishly he had turned to the photograph for sympathy and understanding, but he knew that his father could not understand. He sat down on the bed and held his face in his hands. Why didn't his father understand? Now as never before in his life he needed help. He was groping blindly. For the first time the armor of his pride had been pierced. What was it that had suddenly gone wrong with his world? Then a curious thought possessed him. Was his father right? Was life as he had represented it to the boy, and later to the growing man, the life that was real? A pall of loneliness descended on Harry, a sense of helplessness surged through him. Hot tears of resentment wet his fingers. . . .

It was half past seven when Harry reached the Copleys', a massive brick house on the river side of Beacon Street. The maid took his hat and coat and he walked up the sweep of stairs to the second floor. He was a trifle early and the other guests had not yet arrived. Beyond the wide doorway which led from the white paneled hall was the library, a large room with a great bay window overlooking the river. The walls were lined with books halfway to the ceil-

ing, and above the bookcases were several fine portraits of early members of the family. A large oil painting of a ship hung over the fireplace, a picture Harry always noticed because marine paintings were one of his father's hobbies; the family fortune came from the sea. A fire was spitting and crackling on the hearth and he walked noiselessly over the heavy carpet and backed comfortably toward the grateful warmth.

There were footsteps in the hall, and Mr. Copley came into the room. He was a slender man with close-cut gray hair and an angular face marred by a slight scar on the right cheek. Harry knew him as a prominent graduate of Harvard and an eminent architect, but chiefly as the father of Helen Copley, a prim, plain girl with a cutting tongue, whom he had met at the Friday evening dances the year before.

The older man came forward. "Good evening, Gray. Excuse me for not being here before you, but you were on time, which in these days is early."

Two other men followed into the room. One was Dixon, his broad shoulders and slim legs accentuated by his evening clothes; the other was Ned Little, another Bostonian, in Harry's

class. The girls and two more men arrived a few minutes later, the former in a chattering, laughing group, gay, in light dresses. Harry was talking to his host when the men entered. He looked up casually. Arthur Clark stood in the doorway. By a strange coincidence this was the first time that Harry had dined with Clark in Boston. The occurrence of the afternoon flashed across his mind. It was unlucky that they should be brought together at the same dinner party on that particular evening. But it was not for that alone that Harry resented Clark's presence. Clark was an outsider, a product of an environment that was foreign to all that he understood. It irritated Harry that this example of self-advancement should be included in a society which he considered almost a caste.

He met Clark's glance and nodded stiffly. Then abruptly he brushed him from his mind, for in the knot of girls he caught sight of Ellen Davenport, her dark hair and eyes distinguishing her from her companions. With apparent unconcern he broke away from his host and edged through the little group, stopping for a moment to give his hand to Mrs. Copley and to express one of the trite conventionalities always so ready on his lips.



"Hello, Ellen."

She turned with a smile that gave him a white flash of gleaming teeth between her red lips.

"Why, Harry, how nice that you are here."

He shook hands with Helen Copley, who stood beside her. Somehow he could not help comparing them as they stood side by side; the one radiant with the perfect flush of youth, the other a pale plain girl with sharp collar bones and the angular face of her father.

He turned again to Ellen: "May I have supper with you to-night?"

She nodded assent. "Mr. Clark asked me, but I thought I would reserve it. No, Harry, this isn't a compliment to you. I would have said yes to the first acquaintance who asked me."

"Don't you like Clark?" he blurted.

"Oh, I hardly know him." She leaned near to him and spoke in an undertone, the soft fragrance of her hair enveloping him as he listened. "He is so Western; very nice, I suppose, but he takes so much for granted."

A few minutes later they went down to dinner, the girls half filling the white stairway like a spray of wistaria as they descended.

Harry found his place across the table from



Ellen and he noticed with ill-concealed annoyance that Clark was seated at her left. He spoke politely but without apparent purpose to a tall dark débutante on his right, a lithe graceful girl who, he knew, was an ardent horsewoman. As a boy Harry had prided himself on his own horsemanship, for in those days his father maintained a well-filled stable. With conventional interest he inquired if she had hunted yet this autumn. Her fulsome reply gave him leisure to watch Ellen and the man beside her.

He had known Clark only slightly, for Clark had entered college from a Western high school, and Harry with his clique of school friends increased the radius of his acquaintance slowly. In fact, he remembered seeing Clark for the first time at a class smoker in the spring of his freshman year. Clark had entered with conditions and been debarred from football his fall term, but by the midyear he had cleaned his slate and flung himself with impetuous energy into the class activities.

Somehow Harry resented this strenuous progress. Class meetings and class politics seemed to him below the level of his social standing. In his class he recognized various distinctions. He

realized that a large proportion of his classmates earned their way entirely or in part; he knew that the circle of his intimate friends comprised but a slim minority. And yet the Bourbon tendencies of his inheritance drew him each month closer into the group of elect which he so clearly preferred. To mingle in the affairs of the whole class seemed to him an unnecessary lessening of natural distinctions. Politics was for the politicians, a gross lot at best. He was ready to criticize and regret their depths of depravity, but he shrank from contaminating himself. Like most men, he expected the miracle of reformation through the intervention of others.

Across the table Clark was monopolizing the conversation with Ellen. During the perfunctory small talk which he conducted with his neighbor, Harry watched them with troubled interest. He had met Ellen Davenport in his school days. Through occasional contact their acquaintance had ripened into intimacy, and in the past half year he had recognized in himself a deeper emotion. For generations her family had contributed to the growth of the Commonwealth. In recent years, however, their income had diminished until it reached a point where it seemed incum-

bent on Ellen, particularly when she thought of her younger brother David, still a schoolboy, to consider learning a vocation against the contingencies of later years. To Harry this gave an additional incentive: to be able to lay at charming feet the wealth of which he was the logical inheritor seemed part of the rôle of prince magnificent which it pleased him to play. Not yet had he told her of his desires, but he realized that she sensed them and he believed his cause was not without hope.

Dinner over, there was a pleasant flurry of donning wraps and overcoats. They drove to the hotel, and merged into the tide of youth that gathered there. A flood of rhythmic music and warm air came from the door of the ballroom. Harry stood for a brief moment in the entrance. Ellen had not yet appeared and he hurried to meet his hostesses that he might be ready to claim the first dance with Ellen. As he turned back toward the door he saw her enter, Arthur Clark at her elbow, and a sudden rancor filled him, an incoherent hatred for this pushing product from a world beyond his horizon.

Standing among the crowd of stags at the lower end of the ballroom, Harry watched Ellen

and Clark weave their recurrent circles. He was tempted to cut in, but something held him back, his inherent sense of dignity, perhaps; and he waited. In a final lingering chord the orchestra ended the last encore and Harry hurriedly made a tour of the gilt chairs of the ballroom. She had disappeared. With a curious sense of mortification he walked out into the long hallway. There he saw her, in a far corner, in earnest conversation with Clark, who bent over her with a proprietary intimacy that stirred in Harry instant resentment.

He faced them. "May I have this dance, Ellen?"

She hesitated. "Mr. Clark has just asked me for it. Perhaps you will let me give you the one after this one?"

"Thank you, I will wait for it." He ignored Clark, who had risen and was standing beside her. With a hot flush on his face he turned and walked down the hall. The music began again, the halting sensuous measures of an old-time waltz. He thought of Ellen and wondered whether she would dance it with Clark, his arm around her slender waist, or whether they would sit out the dance in the privacy of their remote corner. Either possibility offended him.



His head boiling with his emotions, he walked down to the lounge. The little room was congested with men, a host of black-clad youths, their gleaming linen, sleek-brushed hair and ruddy cheeks marking them of that lusty brotherhood that finds itself universally at home. Casually a man at his elbow offered him a drink from a silver flask. He accepted and gulped the fiery liquid hurriedly. He was again in the corridor. His ears sensed the mad tuneful tumult of the latest fox-trot, his nostrils breathed the warm scented air. The music ended in a sharp blare of sound and Ellen and Clark appeared in the doorway.

Harry walked quickly forward. "My dance, I believe." There was an injured note in his voice. Again he ignored Clark's presence.

Ellen's frank, open glance almost confused his tense concentration. "You will find us where we were sitting before, when you came before the last dance." They mingled in the outpouring from the ballroom and Harry pressed back against the wall.

With the first note of the dance he found her. As he appeared, Clark rose and left them. Harry dropped into Clark's place beside her. "Ellen,"





HARRY FELT HIS ARM TENSE FOR A BLOW.



he said, "don't let's dance this; I want to talk with you."

She nodded acquiescence and looked at him with a tinge of inquiry in her dark eyes.

He plunged hurriedly into the subject; too long, he felt, had he concealed his purpose. "Ellen, this is, I know, a beastly place to say it, and all that, but — fact is, I love you. Will you marry me?"

She was silent, but he saw the deepening color on her cheeks and the troubled look in her dark eyes. "It is absurd, Harry. You should remember I came out only this winter and you are still a sophomore. Moreover, I am not ready to answer such a question. I like you, Harry, but I may not marry ever, and I want to know others better."

Her voice had grown lower as she spoke and her eyes turned from him and seemed to look at the thick rug beneath her feet.

"I wouldn't have spoken," he said, "but just to-night I realized I have taken too much for granted. That fellow"—there was just a suggestion of a sneer in his intonation of the word—"likes you. I can see that. I don't want you to make a mistake, Ellen."

She looked up, a tinge of resentment in her face. He saw her lips, red against the gleam of her fine teeth, framing her words before she spoke:

“Harry, I do like you, but I wouldn’t marry you to-day, now, if I could. Do you want me to be frank? It’s hard, but I think you do. Life has been very easy for you. You haven’t ever had a chance to try yourself. You speak of Clark. I know what a struggle he has had, and I think it is a fine thing that he is doing for himself — and for Harvard.”

She stopped speaking for a moment. The corridor was deserted, but past the wide door of the ballroom surged the mazing currents of the dancers. “Do you want me to be very frank, Harry?” she asked. He nodded wonderingly. Somehow he was confused by the unexpected decisiveness of her rejection. He had always expected an immediate acceptance when he offered her his heart and name.

“You are not conceited, Harry,” she continued. “It’s more that you’ve never had a chance. Your money and the pride you hold in your family — the place that you felt was all ironed out for you at Harvard — have made



you take life for granted. You have liked me. I didn't realize how much. But you thought if you wanted me all you would have to do was to ask me." Her cheeks flushed at her words. "Suppose I should some day love you. My father is a poor man, and, although we have enough to live on in a simple way, there is nothing but his salary. If anything happened to him, I would have to work, to help. My husband shall not support my family. I'm proud, desperately proud. I won't accept a man because certain material things are his. He must win me with something else."

Her mood changed swiftly and she laid a slender hand on his knee for a passing second. "You're not playing the game, Harry; you're not doing the things you should, and, worst of all, you don't care when you fail. It doesn't matter if it's success in scholarship, or athletics, or class activities, or anything that's good and a part of the life that Harvard stands for. You must do something well."

"Perhaps you don't understand, Ellen; perhaps you don't realize what life is. Does that occur to you?" His words came quickly, for he was stung by the sympathy in her voice. He



rose and stood beside her. "I appreciate the intention in what you have said. But I really don't believe you appreciate the —" He hesitated to proceed.

"The honor you have done me," she continued for him. She stood beside him and her loveliness overwhelmed him. "Please forgive me, Harry, if I've hurt you. It's because I do so truly like you that I want you to be big — the biggest man that Harvard can graduate." . . .

It was two weeks later, a dark, chill evening in early November. In their pleasant living room the two sophomores were stretched in languid ease before an open fire where a pile of logs still moist with watery sap was sizzling and steaming with a sociable sound. Harry, his feet shod in an ancient pair of worn pumps, fingered his rapid way through the novel he held in his hands, skimming the pages for an incident which might hold his attention. The heat of the fire penetrated the thin soles of his slippers, and with ease of movement that is a part of the heritage of young manhood he slung his long legs over the arm of the chair and sank still deeper in the cushions. His room-mate, from another chair facing the other end of the fireplace, regarded him with lazy interest.

“What are you going to do about that test in History Four?” he inquired.

“Continue to read this highly uninspired novel, Clarence; and what are you going to do?”

Clarence grinned. “Guess I’ll go over to Dan’s room. There’s a little game there to-night. Want to come?”

Harry tossed the book away from him. “Sure. What’s that noise?”

They both listened; then Clarence pushed up a window. Cold, damp air blew into the room. Far off in some distant street was a sound of men’s voices, now almost distinct, now lost as the wind eddied in the street. Intently they listened. Of a sudden the sound was clear and near, a deep, measured, marching chant, with a few high-swelling notes at the end of the refrain.

“Well, it’s evident that Clarence Clear isn’t on the second fifteen,” muttered his room-mate.

“Or Harry Gray,” said the other.

The voices grew louder, then suddenly the marchers turned the corner at Massachusetts Avenue and the deep refrain filled the quiet side street. Clarence turned out the lights. From the darkness of the third-story window they could

watch unseen. Down the street came the marchers. Here and there windows across the street in Russell Hall darkened. The strange procession passed beneath them and disappeared in Mount Auburn Street. Clarence closed the window and turned on the lights.

For generations of college life the Institute has each year elected in secret session its membership from the sophomore class. Selected in ten groups of fifteen, the total from each class has represented but a small proportion of the total number of sophomores. The order of the election has always conferred a vague distinction. To be the first man on the first fifteen is an honor, and in the same way a place on the first fifteen is more desired than a place on the second.

Although Harry had for some time realized that there was no chance of his making the first fifteen, the knowledge that the second also had passed by him gave an unaccustomed tinge of despondency to his mood. For the first time in his recollection he was sharply conscious of a doubt of the security of his position among his fellow classmates. Jack Dixon had been elected first man on the first. Harry could not fail to

recognize Dixon's rare combination of athletic powers, scholarship, and personal magnetism. But there were several others whose early selection he could not so readily understand. They had not entered Harvard from any prominent preparatory schools, their names were unknown socially, they were not even the product of a Boston or New York environment.

As though stirred by some telepathic impulse, Clarence interrupted his moody pondering. "I heard at dinner to-night that Felix Chapman made the second fifteen," he said.

"Felix Chapman! Felix Chapman!" Harry repeated. The information stunned him like an unexpected blow. "Why, he —" He relapsed into silence.

"Some of the fellows were talking about you," Clarence continued. "Not pleasant talk, but I'll pass it along for your own good, in friendly-little-room-mate spirit. Said you were going to get a few jolts before the year is out for lying down at football."

"Who said that?" Harry demanded. He got up from his chair, his face red with anger and mortification. "It's a lie; I didn't quit. I was dropped because I was the last candidate on the



squad, and I was last because I hate the damn game."

"Your answer moves me to do some nice moralizing, but I won't. I don't blame you, but it's hard luck, that's all. Come on; let's go over to Dan's. I can afford to pick up a bit of change after last night."

The two men found their hats on the window seat. "You may have to stake me a little," Clarence suggested. "I've got to win to get even."

The air in Dan Herrick's room was hot and pungent with tobacco smoke. Herrick in a tweed Norfolk jacket looked like some obese animal. He crouched behind a huge pile of red and white and blue chips. A single brilliant light flooded the green cloth thrown across the table. With a plump, manicured hand Herrick waved welcome to his guests. His face was round and by no means unpleasant: a ruddy face, in which self-indulgence was evident, crowned by a crop of long black hair smoothly brushed from the white line of the parting low above his left ear. "Pull up chairs." He waved his hand vaguely. "Just six of us. Have a cigarette, Harry — eh, Clarence?"

They drew up to the table. Stuyvesant Bar-

ing, Catewell, and Hawley were already seated. These classmates formed an intimate little clique.

The chips were divided and the cards fluttered about the table. As in all things, Harry played a nonchalant game. Beside him sat Baring, playing quietly, with little banter or comment, discarding wisely and accepting the fortune of his cards with quiet philosophy.

An hour passed and the pile in front of Herrick's seat had increased steadily. But Clarence had repeatedly drawn on the banker to recoup his frequent losses.

"Best pot of the evening." Herrick raked a mass of chips from the center of the table. "What time shall we quit? Being the heavy winner, I'm agreeable to any suggestion."

"Let's stop with the first hand after it strikes one," Clarence suggested. He was very pale and his eyes were reddened with the smoke. Beside him lay a pile of cigarette stubs. "Let me have another twenty-five dollars' worth, Dan — I'm cleaned again."

Even Harry was now playing with an attempt at caution, for, although he had not lost as heavily as Clarence, he was badly in the hole

and his exhausted bank account would not be replenished by his monthly check for several weeks to come. The situation was annoying, but at intervals in the past similar situations had occurred and an unpleasant conference with his father had wiped out his debts.

One o'clock struck, and with embarrassed jocularity Herrick announced the sum of his winnings. All eyes regarded Clarence. With forced gayety he screwed his thin lips into a smile. "Guess I'm the star loser. Haven't got it on me; check-book either. Here —" He scrawled his I O U's on some sheets of letter paper. "Guess this will have to do." Ruefully he regarded the figures behind the dollar signs. "This certainly isn't my lucky day."

The room-mates walked back in silence and without comment went hurriedly to bed. To the complacent mind of Harry Gray sleep came readily and he awakened the next morning as from a stupor, the slender pajama-clad figure of Clarence standing over him.

He thrust a printed post card under Harry's nose. "I'm to call to see the dean at half past two to-day! Came in this morning's mail."

"Probably doesn't amount to anything." Harry realized the lameness of his reply.

"On the contrary, you know that inasmuch as it's addressed to me it unfortunately probably does mean something. You don't think he's going to award me a scholarship or invite me to go to Florida with him this Christmas?" he added caustically.

Harry regarded the summons. "What's on your conscience, Clarey?" he asked. "You know, or you ought to know better than any one else what it's all about."

"Sure, I know: it's any one of a lot of things, and, for that matter, you're lucky this isn't addressed to you. I've had a good allowance from home and I'm in debt up to my ears in every shop on the Square. Last night I tried to win because I needed cash, and I left a lot of samples of my handwriting that don't mean anything because I'm overdrawn at the bank."

"The dean hasn't called you because you're in debt."

"Probably not, unless some tradesman I owe money to has gone to him about it. Where I'm in bad is my marks. Last year I stood pretty well, mostly C's; what *you* call a gentleman's average. So far this year I've flunked about half my courses. You know how I came out on



the hour exams," Clarence laughed grimly. "Looks as though I was going to graduate — out the back door. What I want to tell you, Harry, is that I'm scared; and you'll get it next if you're not careful."

Clarence tumbled into his clothes and with a notebook in his hand darted out of the room. Harry heard his feet clatter down the stairs and then the slam of the heavy street door. Slowly he shaved and bathed. The sharp chill of the cold water sent the blood tingling through him, and his smooth skin glowed pink as he dried his body with a huge towel. He dressed slowly, changing a necktie already adjusted when his eyes told him that the color failed to harmonize perfectly with the dark gray of his suit.

He was undisturbed by Clarence's outburst, but there was much that Clarence said that gave him food for thought. The one thing that particularly annoyed him was Clarence's reference to the "Gentleman's average of C." He had been accustomed to have Clarence accept his dicta at face value. He demanded of Clarence a certain hero worship.

Harry recalled perfectly his comments on the C grade of scholarship. He felt that an average

of A or B indicated a concentration on studies to the exclusion of all else. Men who received such marks were "grinds." Vaguely he felt that such men studied for high marks because they knew of nothing else with which to occupy themselves. For him or his immediate friends to sacrifice their pleasures for the laurels of scholarship was absurd. He believed that to do both was an impossibility. On the other hand, to fail in a course was in a degree humiliating. Hence he preferred to speak of the average grade of C as the "Gentleman's mark." He would not have admitted that he could not attain A's if he desired; but he preferred to leave the scholastic honors to the grinds.

There were many activities in the busy life of the university whose significance Harry failed to appreciate. Once at the close of freshman year Felix Chapman had expatiated on debating and its importance as an undergraduate activity. Harry's reaction had been characteristic and had drawn from Felix an explosion of condemnation. He had forgotten exactly what he said, but his comment had been to the effect that debating had his approval, but it was impossible for him to conceive of himself participating.

At four o'clock he called up Ellen on the telephone and asked if he might come in for tea. He had not talked with her since the night of the dance, but she had been constantly in his thoughts and the unexpected outcome of their talk that evening had brought sharply before him other situations which were equally disturbing. He was half conscious of the fact that he was drifting; that he had drifted perhaps farther than he knew. Her peremptory refusal had galvanized him momentarily. It had hurt his pride; it had offended him. Notwithstanding, it was to Ellen that he turned for consolation and reassurance. Her voice, when he asked if she would be in, was strengthening in its calm sweetness. As she spoke, he visualized her — her slender, perfect youth, her poise, her graciousness.

The Davenports' house had no distinguishing feature, but Harry's steps turned automatically up the short brick walk. The maid opened the door and, recognizing a frequent visitor, left him to go up unannounced to the library on the second floor. Ellen had been reading and still held her book in her hand when she met him. A single table lamp lighted the room, throwing

her into a darkened silhouette and tinging her hair with a warm light. There was an inspiration in the cool touch of her fingers, a thrill that seemed to intensify his emotion.

She sank back into her deep chair and he dropped carelessly down on the hassock at her feet. Their talk ignored the occurrences of the night he had asked her to marry him; she spoke of the usual things. But there was a sense of a new situation in his words when he asked: "You are going to the Yale game with me?"

She laughed. "You have already asked me twice and I have promised each time. Of course I will." For a minute neither spoke. A spark of coal snapped from the grate and he pressed out its gleam beneath his foot. "Perhaps I ought not to say this, Harry," she resumed, "but I had hoped I might see you play. I wanted you to make good on the squad. You could have made good. I believe in you."

He looked humbly at her as she spoke, the gentleness of her voice cutting him at every word. "I should have tried harder," he admitted. The admission shocked him. He would have liked to recall his words.

For a while they talked of other things, but



the subject of the game again asserted itself. They spoke of various players and weighed the chances of the probable outcome. Clark's name was mentioned.

"I shouldn't be surprised if he got into the game," Ellen commented.

"How well do you like Arthur Clark?" It had nothing to do with her remark, but the name of the man seemed to flare like a red streak before Harry's eyes.

"I like Arthur. I like him better than I used to. Perhaps it's because I admire him. As father would say, 'He started back of scratch' at Harvard. He has forced his own way."

"He isn't a gentleman."

"What do you mean by that?" The brutality of Harry's remark stung her into a defense of the man.

"I mean," he qualified, "that he is pushing and too aggressive. It's probably because he comes from some obscure place and doesn't understand."

"You mean," she corrected, "that he isn't a snob." There was a flush in her smooth cheeks.

Harry realized that he must withdraw or he would strengthen the man he criticized. "I guess

it's just that I personally don't like him. He doesn't go with our crowd. He doesn't belong, somehow. It's awfully decent of you to stand up for him this way."

Suddenly he felt very humble. "Perhaps I should be a little aggressive myself," he continued. "Ellen, sometimes, only lately, I've sort of felt that Harvard isn't giving me recognition. You know, I haven't made the Institute yet, and there hasn't been a word said about father's club. Of course, father and Uncle Bill told me last year to wait, and I've turned down a couple of second-raters, but it puzzles me. I don't like it."

With what seemed almost studied cruelty she again flung Clark's name at him. "I was told that Arthur will make an early fifteen; of course he couldn't take it now because of football." Harry looked quickly at her, but there was no trace of sharpness in the deep brown eyes that met his own.

"Yes, I know it," he answered.

Then their talk turned to other subjects. Her father's ill health worried her. Ever since her mother's death, a few years before, Ellen had assumed charge of the household, and she had

learned that economy was necessary if the old brick house in which she had been born, as well as her father before her, was to be maintained. John Davenport came of an ancient and honored Boston family. On his graduation from Harvard a voyage, prompted by his never robust health, in a sailing ship to Java and Australia, had crystallized his desire to devote his life to the natural sciences. On his return, his father, a clergyman, had succeeded in financing the young man through the post-graduate years in the university, which made a doctor's degree possible. Since that day he had taught in Harvard. From his father had come the house in which he lived and which represented the only estate he could pass on at his death to his son and daughter.

Harry got up to go. "Thank you for what you said this afternoon, Ellen," he said. "I wouldn't let any one else say to me some of the things you have said, but I like it when you do it. Perhaps it's because it makes me think you care a little for me."

He held her hand, and she did not take it from him. "I do care, Harry," she said; "not so much as you would have me, but enough to

make me want you to be big and fine and play your part. Sometimes I think you only see the things at hand, the easy conquests and the pleasures of easy living. It's the far horizon you must see, Harry; if you will see that, I think you will win the near-by things that will help you on your way."



### III

IN the car to Cambridge, Harry found a seat beside Herrick. As though preparing to disclose a confidence, Herrick turned his face toward Harry's ear and lowered his voice: "Do you know, Gray, I've an ambition: I want to graduate with honors."

For a fleeting second Harry stared at him, wondering if this were not some jest that Herrick was trying out on him. Then he laughed rather awkwardly.

"I seem to be running into a lot of earnest workers lately. Personally, I hope to get through without killing myself, put in a couple of years in the law school, travel a bit, marry —" He paused, for the word stopped his train of thought.

They left the subway at the Square and walked briskly to the dormitory.

"Here's a mess," was Clarence's greeting as Harry opened the door. "The dean gave me a heart-to-heart to-day that's of interest to you,

my lad." He regarded Harry with quizzical interest.

"What did he say?"

"Said you and I were a pair of wasters and that if we didn't become different from what we are something unpleasant would happen to us."

"Any particular criticisms?" asked Harry.

"Rather! Commented on my liabilities about town here and intimated that I'd have more money if I played less at cards. That's where you came in. Said you were a bad influence, that your allowance was too big, that you had no ambition and your head was turned. Told me to tell you that and to consider yourself warned, whatever he meant by that."

Harry flushed hotly. "Anything else?"

Clarence switched on the light in his bedroom and disappeared behind the door. "No, I guess that's enough. Let's go and see a show to-night and forget our worries."

The morning of the Yale game came bright and clear. Harry had two Saturday morning recitations, but he decided to cut them, although the marks that he had been receiving during the past months were far below the "gentleman's average" of which he so often boasted, and a

little more backsliding would see him on probation, the final chance given to a delinquent student — the last phase between reinstatement and expulsion.

Ellen had invited him to lunch. Half an hour before the set time he rang her doorbell. They chatted happily without reference to past happenings, and he caught something of her ingenuous excitement over the afternoon's contest. He had engaged an automobile to take them out to the field, and as he tucked her in the deep seat of the tonneau her glowing cheeks seemed to reflect the crimson of the great bunch of roses he had brought her.

They found their seats in the north end of the stadium just inside the temporary wooden stand and watched the stream of men and women flood into the vast inclosure through innumerable entrances and scatter out along the terraced seats.

A roar of cheers brought them to their feet. From under a low opening, in the far end, a flock of tan-and-blue-clad men rushed out into the arena. Now they separated, and eleven men from their number charged down the green turf in rapid formations. A louder burst of

cheers echoed back from side to side as the Harvard squad surged from the opening. Before the cheering section frenzied men swung their arms and from deep throats rose the slow battle cry of Harvard: "Harvard, Harvard, Harvard."

A sudden silence . . . Yale had won the toss. Again a roar of voices shattered the stillness. Again silence. Scattered about the field, the players seemed dwarfed and insignificant. Then came the kick-off; smoothly the ball soared in a long curve. The game had begun.

Close by his side Harry felt Ellen tremble with excitement. With a swift onslaught Harvard carried the ball to Yale's ten-yard line. Like a wall, the slim line of blue held. Fourth down. Something had happened, for out of a broken play rolled the ball. A blue figure seized it; zigzagged down the field, dodged twice; there was a streak of crimson, and the two players were on the ground. With an attack that seemed irresistible, the Yale team tore through the Harvard line. From the Yale side a frenzy of tumult greeted every gain. The five-yard line was reached. The red line



held. Again came the blue charge. Like a spike, the Yale formation drove through. A touchdown! The cheers seemed interminable. From the field the ball soared toward the goal posts and struck the horizontal bar. No goal.

The game now settled into an equal contest. Up and down the field the teams fought their way into the last quarter. Again the line of battle set toward the Yale goal. Then came a storm of cheers and a billowing of crimson flags in the darkening amphitheater. Harvard had scored. There was a silence. Then came another burst of cheers. Harvard had kicked the goal. The score was 6 to 5.

Like greyhounds unleashed, two substitutes dashed out from the Harvard benches. Ellen gripped Harry's arm. "It's Arthur!" She was almost crying with excitement. "They've put him in. He has his chance!"

At last the final period, when a few brief minutes seemed prolonged into hours and each minute might end the play. With grim tenacity the crimson team pushed slowly down the field. Again a fumble. Again a Yale player snatched the bouncing ball. The field was clear. A wild roar of encouragement burst

from the Yale side. On he sped. Slowly gaining, a Harvard end raced behind him. They closed. With a tigerish dive Clark tackled, and the two rolled on the sod. Facing almost certain defeat, Harvard had held her victory. The whistle of the referee shrilled. The game was over.

As they moved out of the stadium, helpless in the stream of humanity, there was a sudden stop, and Ellen and Harry were shoved violently back to create a passage. Half carried, half supported, the Harvard squad came down the narrow lane. Grimed and battered with the scars of recent battle, they passed amid wild cheering. Harry saw Clark among the foremost. There was a deep gash in his forehead, and the blood and sweat and dirt of the field almost disguised him.

The crowd closed in and moved slowly on past the locker building. Here some thousands waited to cheer the team, and one by one their names were roared in throaty chorus. Painfully Harry listened, then it came: "Rah, rah, rah, Clark, Clark, Clark!"

It was Harvard's day, and Clark had saved it. Ellen went back to Boston with Mrs. Copley.

Clarence was dining somewhere in town. For one of the few times in Harry's life a sense of loneliness oppressed him. He walked up to the Square and ate a solitary lunch. As he swung around through Mount Auburn Street on his way back bursts of riotous laughter and the tumult of lifted voices came out through the opened windows of the clubhouses. Vaguely this club life which he so complacently expected as his rightful inheritance seemed remote and elusive. He was farther from its realization to-night than ever. He had pulled out of the great surging stream of undergraduate life into a quiet backwater and expected that he would be found there and carried out triumphant on the tide.

But the current was sweeping by him and from his place he saw others borne along on the stream. He thought of it with sudden bitterness. From early boyhood he had considered his life as a settled sequence of events; it was his part only to accept them as they came. Vaguely he wondered if the present was a prophecy of the future. A lump filled his throat. For a brief moment he longed for sympathy, for the understanding and partisan

love of a mother, such as he had known when he was a little boy.

There was an envelope beneath the door — a telegram. He tore it open and read the brief message. It was from his father. It read: "I would like to have you come home for a day as soon as possible Sunday preferably." He reread the typewritten words. This was the second time in his life that his father had wired him. He remembered well the first telegram, for it had called him to his mother's bedside.

Harry caught the early subway to Boston and, almost hidden in his coonskin coat, sank down in a corner of the ill-ventilated car. At South Station he breakfasted on a cup of coffee and some rolls. It was still dark when the dingy train pulled out of the station, and half an hour later he watched the day come, cold and cheerless in a leaden sky.

New Bedford was deserted; fog filled the streets. The old Gray mansion was a short fifteen minutes' walk from the station, and as Harry climbed the low hill through the quiet old-fashioned streets the fog began to break and disappear before a rising breeze from the sea. He turned in from the street between two



granite gateposts. It was an old residence, built by his grandfather, a massive, square pile of granite well back from the street.

Harry pulled the silvered knob at the side of the wide mahogany panel. That door was a symbol of his grandfather; Vermont granite and Santo Domingo mahogany were the materials of which he built his house. The mahogany had been brought to New Bedford in one of his own ships.

Old Jenny opened the door. Cutting short her exuberant Irish welcome, he asked for his father and found that he had been ill, but was again downstairs. A wood fire was burning in his father's study.

Harry moved about the room. The books, the fine old furniture, the broad desk with the heavy silver fittings, the pictures, even the deep rug beneath his feet, all conspired to carry him back into childhood.

Although he had not heard a step, he was suddenly conscious that his father was standing in the doorway. Their greeting was formal, a filial kiss on his father's cheek and the slight pressure of their clasped hands.

Together they sat down on the divan. The

light from the fire shone on the older man, and Harry felt, as he had always felt, an admiration for the perfect grooming and aristocratic presence of this product of inheritance and environment.

For an hour they talked casually of trivial things, and while Harry was conscious of reluctance on his own part to discuss the recent happenings in his life in Cambridge, he soon began to feel a similar reluctance on the part of his father to speak of something which evidently disturbed him. Their conversation ebbed. The older man rose stiffly from his seat and paced slowly back and forth before the fire, his head sunk slightly forward on his stooped shoulders. His step was feeble and his left hand trembled continuously. He faced his son.

“I have two unpleasant things to tell you. My doctor tells me that I am on my last course; he won’t say just when; it may be a few years — or weeks.”

An emotion that was new to Harry, and for the moment overpowering, seized him: a quick welling up of sympathy. Instinctively he stood up and put his hand on the thin shoulders. “Why, father, it can’t be.”

"Sit down. There is another thing. You have been brought up to expect a continuance of the fortune which has been ours. If I am given time, you will inherit enough to lead the life which I have hoped for you: enough to travel, to marry, to keep this place which was your father's and your grandfather's. But if I am called quickly I cannot say what may be left to you. Perhaps I have not followed enough the guidance of others. I have followed my own wishes. I did not want Holman to disturb investments that for years have maintained us."

They were silent. The ship's clock on the mantel struck six bells in slow, sweet couplets.

"Perhaps," the older man continued, "all that I am saying may be an unnecessary alarm. I wanted to talk with you, however; if anything should happen to me before — " He hesitated, then continued: "You see, the doctor isn't altogether encouraging, and it has depressed me. All I want to tell you is to be ready to rely on yourself if need be. Don't be disturbed by my talk, Harry; I'm good for a few years more, and business conditions won't continue this way indefinitely."

They dined together in the big dining room,

and afterward smoked and talked in opposite corners of the divan in the study.

At four Harry rose to go. "I must be back to-night," he explained; "early lecture to-morrow, you know. Rotten train service Sunday." . . .

Early winter had flung a blanket of snow over the gray roofs of Cambridge. It was two weeks since Harry's trip home. He had written his father once, and had received in reply a few feebly scrawled lines on a sheet of stiff white paper with his father's initials in small square black letters in the upper corner. Phelps Gray was better, the letter said. Harry accepted the assurance and swept the entire matter from his mind. Clarence, thoroughly frightened by the dean's warning, was devoting himself to his studies, and Harry for a few days caught a little of the spirit of his room-mate's activity.

He had seen Ellen several times, and although she seemed each time more radiant, Harry felt on his own part a sense of estrangement that sent him back to Cambridge to plunge more completely into the activities of the small group with which he was becoming more and more closely identified. His evenings invariably



lasted into the early morning, for there were dinners and dances in Boston, and on other evenings there was always a card game in Herrick's or some other room, at which he consistently piled up an increased deficit.

Morning after morning he squelched the alarm clock at his bedside and decided to cut his first lecture. Once, after a late dance, he went to a nine o'clock with his overcoat concealing the evening clothes beneath. The mid-year examinations were still far ahead. Vaguely he procrastinated; a week or two before the final crisis he would "bone up" and get through somehow or other.

Herrick dropped in one afternoon and sprawled on the window seat. He had much to say about his system of study: three hours a day, seven days a week. Harry mentally magnified Herrick's ability and his power of concentration to appease his own faintly twinging conscience. He was not like Herrick — that was the excuse he made to himself.

Together they went to town in Herrick's car to dine and go to a theater. It was the inevitable musical show, a succession of songs and choruses through which flitted the leading



“IF I AM CALLED QUICKLY I CANNOT SAY WHAT MAY BE LEFT TO YOU”



comedian in varied costumes in character with the lightning changes of the chorus.

"Notice that blonde, second from the right," Herrick whispered audibly in Harry's ear. "Look, she sees me! I know her!"

A vivacious girl with a heavy wig above a childish face winked appreciably at Herrick's violent signaling.

"Let's meet 'em for supper," Herrick proposed. "She has a friend, Grace, that other blonde next to the old dodo in the center, who'll come with her. We'll get a stall up at Hindman's."

"Oh, let's go off and have supper by ourselves," Harry answered. He was not a prude, but the tawdriness of it repelled him.

Herrick laughed good-humoredly. "All right," he consented. "All right, Sir Galahad."

Harry flushed. "I just don't like that sort of stuff. That's all. And I don't see how a fellow can get much amusement trailing around with a bunch of painted women if he really cares for any girls of his own kind."

They left the theater and separated from the crowd outpouring from the entrance. It was cold and a fine snow fell from an almost cloud-



less sky in which the moon appeared and disappeared as though shrouded by a white veil of varying density.

Hindman's was warm, and a three-piece orchestra rioted through a selection of familiar, frothy airs. They found a stall in a corner. Herrick was in jovial mood, and produced a flask from his pocket the contents of which he extolled highly. Harry, aided by two highballs, gradually responded to his vivacity.

Herrick soon found himself a partner, and in languorous embrace swayed about the floor. It was the girl in the show, Harry noticed. Herrick returned, mopping his hot face with his handkerchief. "Fine little dancer," he commented. "Well, let's go. Drinks all gone and you won't dance, so that's that."

They paid their check and moved down the room. From a crowded stall voices called to Herrick. "Got to tell 'em good-night," he explained. "Come along!" Hooking Harry by the elbow, he led him to the table and introduced him to the party. For a few minutes they stood talking.

"Good-bye, Harry," called one of the girls. As they moved on, Harry noticed two men

who had just arrived and were sitting down at a table. One of them was Clark. He stared, first at Harry, then at the noisy party in the stall. "Good-bye, Harry," the girl called again, waving a thin, powdered arm.

Outside, the night struck them with a sudden and penetrating coldness; the street was silent and deserted. Harry breathed deeply, filling his lungs with the clean air.

"You and I were made different," he commented to Herrick. "All that jazzy music and stuffy air full of food smells and cheap perfumery sort of annoys me. And what voices most of that sort of women have, the kind you see in the cabaret joints."

Herrick chuckled. "Did you see your friend Clark there? Lord, but he slung you a nasty look. What's the trouble between you two? Seems to me he's a nice enough chap, and if he keeps on at the rate he's going he'll be one of the big men in the class by the time he graduates. Don't you like him?"

"No!" Harry hesitated for a moment. "It's a personal matter."

In silence they walked back to the garage where Herrick had left his car. The incidents

of the evening, ordinary as they were, had implanted in his mind a growing realization that a set of values existed which he must recognize. The horizon had broadened perceptibly.

The holidays came and were gone in a rush of activity. On the day of his return to college Harry called on Ellen. There was no mention of Clark in their conversation, but in an uncanny way he felt Clark's presence, as though he were actually sitting beside them.

Ellen was more quiet than usual. With the New Year she had begun a course of study to fit herself for secretarial work, she told him. She dismissed the subject of her work lightly, but Harry realized that necessity prompted her action.

He left the house with a feeling that the gap between them had widened. He also realized that he loved her more deeply than he had ever realized.

Now the mid-year examinations were at hand. With his old procrastination, Harry had delayed to buckle down to work until the last minute. He turned to his studies with the frenzy of desperation.

Jack Dixon dropped into the room one

evening and found Harry hard at it. "Congratulations," he said, with evident sincerity. "How they coming?"

"Rotten!" Harry tipped back in his chair. "I didn't realize how much I've missed until I started to make it up."

"I'm interested," Dixon said, "because I want to see you get out for the crew this spring. You've got just the build for an oarsman. I believe you'd like it."

Harry colored slightly. "I've a job on my hands now," he said, "that I must get out of the way first. If I'm in good standing after the mid-year, I'd like to talk more about it."

When he thought over the conversation a little later he dimly realized that Dixon was trying to help him; was holding out a chance by which Harry might redeem his failure at football. The thought mortified him. He was not willing to accept help from any one.

The nightmare of the examinations was finally over. Harry had taken five in as many days and for the two weeks previous he had crammed day and night for the ordeal.

A few days later he found a postal from the dean in his mail box. The cold printed form



requested him to be at the dean's office the morning following at eleven o'clock. Harry had heard from his examinations and his worst fears were realized: D in two subjects, C in one, failure in two.

There were half a dozen undergraduates sitting uneasily on the long benches in the outer office. The hands of the clock touched eleven, and a few minutes later the door behind the railing opened and an upper classman emerged smiling. His good humor seemed to augur well, and when the clerk beckoned Harry went into the room in a faint glow of optimism.

"Good-morning, Mr. Gray. Please sit down."

Harry sat stiffly in the chair, and regarded the man across the desk from him. Through the tall windows the sunshine flooded the big room and gleamed on the polished desk top.

The dean folded his hands on the edge of the desk while he studied a slip of paper before him.

"Mr. Gray," he began, "I am afraid this cannot be a pleasant occasion. I have been following you with particular attention for some time. It seems to me desirable that you withdraw from the university."

For a minute Harry sat stupefied. Probation

he expected. But expulsion; that was inconceivable!

As though he had read Harry's thoughts, the other continued: "Please do not think, Mr. Gray, that you are being judged entirely on your examinations. In those you did fail, decisively. But there are other things that I am considering. Your attendance through the year has been very irregular. You have failed completely to apply yourself to your studies. Furthermore, and I may say particularly, I do not think your habits are a desirable influence. You need not require me to specify the moral effect on yourself and others of intemperance, gambling, and other dissipation."

Harry's eyes met the eyes of the dean in a blank gaze. "You mean," he asked, amazement in each slowly spoken word, "that I am expelled from Harvard?"

"Let us not call it 'expelled,' Mr. Gray. I warned you, some months ago, through your room-mate. You did not heed my warnings. Harvard, let us put it, has demoralized you. For your own good, I believe it necessary for you to meet life on some other basis. I am willing to give you the opportunity to withdraw from the

university. A year from now, perhaps, if you prove yourself worthy, your return might be discussed. The university must be considered. You have had the misfortune of too much money. You have measured life so far by the yardstick of dollars. That is wrong. That you are wrong is doubtless not your fault, but it is not fair that because you have money you should idle away four years and by so doing perhaps keep a better man out of here."

Harry got up stiffly. "Do you realize what this means to me; to my father?" he said. "You said something about 'other dissipation.' What did you mean by that?"

"I am informed that you have certain undesirable acquaintances. It is not because of that, however, that I am doing this. That is only one of many things that contribute to my decision."

Harry flushed hotly. Here, he felt certain, was proof of Clark's enmity. From him alone must have come the malicious information. For a fleeting second he felt impelled to name his informant and brand the lie. Then he drew himself stiffly to his full height, and spoke quietly: "Yes. I was seen speaking with two

chorus girl in a cabaret. You were so far correctly informed."

The dean left his chair and put a friendly hand on Harry's shoulder. As though pleading a case, he repeated his arguments.

"Perhaps I'm wrong," Harry finally retorted. "You are sending me away because I am living my own life as I see it. I can't be some one else, something that is not myself." . . .

From the steps of University Hall, Harry surveyed the Yard. Against the sky the graceful gray branches of the elms wove delicate lacery; like the personification of traditions, the ancient brick dormitories looked out across the center of Harvard life and activity. For the first time a wave of real sentiment swept through him; he realized that he had grown to care for this ancient institution as a man grows unconsciously to care for a friend. The appalling climax of the past few minutes awoke him to bitter realization.

Walking back to his room, his mind began to adjust itself. Perhaps this might not be final, after all. Uncle Bill Holman, his father's friend, was a man of prominence and a distinguished Harvard graduate. His influence might stay the sentence. Suddenly he thought of Ellen. What



would she say? Was this the end of his romance as well as his college career? He decided not to go to his room, but to go directly to town and find Holman at his office. Then he would see Ellen.

For a few minutes that seemed interminable Harry waited in the outer office. At last a boy ushered him down a long corridor and through a leather-covered door.

Uncle Bill Holman was writing at a broad table that faced his desk. He was a big man with a shock of iron-gray hair that covered his head like an unkempt wig. His heavy jaw moved slowly as he wrote, chewing the words traced by his pen. He was smooth-shaven, but the heavy bristling eyebrows gave a hairy appearance to his face.

"Hello, Harry." He laid down the pen and reached a big hand across the table. "I've been wanting to talk to you. Glad you came in."

They shook hands, and Harry drew a chair up to the table. "Uncle Bill," he began, "I'm in trouble. I want your advice, your help."

"I'm sorry. Tell me about it."

"Well, I've been fired!"

Holman's eyes closed slightly, but there was

no movement of the massive features to indicate the reaction caused by Harry's words.

"I want to stay, to get my degree. Can you help me?"

"Tell me the whole thing, Harry. Start at the beginning."

Painfully Harry recounted his talk with the dean, and on each of the charges against his deportment endeavored to give a fair answer without sparing himself.

"How much do you owe?"

"About a thousand dollars," Harry answered, "perhaps more; I don't know exactly."

"How are you going to square up these debts?"

"Why —" Harry glanced in surprise at the stern but kindly face. "Why," he repeated, "I'll get father to settle them up for me. Meant to ask him at Christmas but he wasn't well and I put it off."

There was silence for a full minute. Then Holman began to speak in a slow, resonant voice:

"What I say may seem harsh, but I shall only repeat your own admissions. You entered with everything a boy could desire. Every oppor-

tunity opened to you. You have failed. I don't believe you are a weakling at heart, but you have played the weakling. For you college has been only a pleasant place for recreation. You have accomplished nothing. You have given nothing of yourself to Harvard; you have taken nothing from her. I shall not intercede for you."

Harry got to his feet. "I came here, hoping you would help me," he said stiffly. "If you do not care to do that, I may as well leave."

"Sit down. You come here after having made an ass of yourself and then resent the advice you ask me to give you. You have had some plain truths told you to-day. I am going to tell you two other things you may not know. Your father is a dying man."

"He told me that."

"And when he dies," Holman continued, "the Gray estate that has been your chief undoing will be a memory."

"You mean —"

"Your father chose to make certain investments. Six months ago he brought the wreckage to me. When the estate is settled I doubt if there will be assets sufficient even to meet his liabilities."

He leaned back in his chair and watched Harry's face.

"Then I am — then I am a pauper?"

Holman suddenly reached forward and struck the table with his clenched fist. "No, by God, no! Not at your age, with a sound body and an education behind you! Not if there is in you a single spark of grit and fight and determination. You've been a quitter long enough. Go out and redeem yourself."

"You call me a quitter!" Harry was on his feet. "If you are father's friend, you shan't do that. A man called me that name once and I took it. I'll never take it again!" Harry's voice rose higher in his excitement. "It's unfair, I tell you. It was a dirty deal to fire me. And you side with them against me! You and father have always told me I had every chance in the world. Don't you see that I've been handicapped all my life? I've been taught to believe that whatever I wanted I was entitled to have. And now — now, when I see that it's all false and the bottom has dropped out — you refuse to help me."

He put on his hat and walked to the door.

"I came here for advice and help. I don't want your advice and I won't have your help!"



The door swung open before his vicious push and closed silently behind him.

Holman leaned over the table and thrummed the surface with his heavy fingers. "I was hard on him," he said to himself; "but he needs to be pounded into sense. It was a good sign, the way he came back at me. If he will only come back at life that way! That's the salvation."

Out in the street Harry was striding toward the Common. The cold, bracing air and the open sky refreshed him, but the heat of his indignation grew as he contemplated his grievances.

Gradually the import of Holman's information regarding his father's finances began to dawn upon him. His whole life had become suddenly complex beyond his ability to conceive.

He rang the Davenports' doorbell and marked time with nervous feet on the vestibule threshold. Miss Davenport was out, the maid informed him. She was having luncheon with Priscilla Dale. He read his watch; it was almost two. Halfway down the block he slowed his pace at the realization that he had not thought out what he would say to Ellen. Well, he would tell her that he was expelled; he would not spare himself. He would tell her of his resolve to leave Cam-

bridge immediately. He did not know where he was going.

The Dales occupied a large modern house on Commonwealth Avenue. It had a gray limestone front of Georgian architecture; within it was a rich conglomerate of a dozen periods. Priscilla Dale was an attractive, unaffected girl; her father Harry despised, chiefly because he had made his own fortune, but also because he expended it with a more lavish than skillful hand.

Impatiently Harry waited in the elaborate reception room.

"Why, Harry, how odd of you to follow me here. Is anything the matter?" Ellen had come down the stairs without his hearing her, and they stood facing each other before the carved stone fireplace.

He told her briefly what had occurred and emphasized with bitterness his uncle's words.

She laid her hand on his arm in a spontaneous flash of sympathy and as instantly withdrew it. "Let me go back and say good-bye to Priscilla. Then you may walk home with me."

Ellen came down again ten minutes later and Harry helped her into her coat. Even that slight contact thrilled him — the warm shoulder be-

neath the sheer blouse that his hand touched as he adjusted her collar. His spirits rose. He felt himself on the eve of great adventure. He was unappreciated; he would go forth into the world and come back to her victorious, crowned with the laurels of success. In a flashing thought he pictured the surprise of his friends and their hurried assurances that they had always believed in him.

“What are you going to do?” she asked. His swinging hand touched hers and he yearned to seize it.

“The world is before me,” he replied grandly, still swayed by the heroics of his imagination. “I am poor, Ellen. I once asked you to share the wealth that I thought I had. It’s gone. I am going to prove to you that I can succeed. I shall bring a new fortune back and lay it at your feet.”

She gave him a quick sidelong glance. “You mustn’t say that you will do this because of me, Harry. I’ve told you that I have no thought of marriage; that I don’t love you enough to marry you.”

“Clark is in love with you,” he broke in. “He’s a rotter —”

"You mustn't say that." Ellen's voice became cold and even. "Arthur Clark is a real man; he has everything against him, and he has done wonders."

"Has he asked you to marry him?"

Ellen's cheeks flamed. "What if he has?" she retorted. "I don't see why you should take it upon yourself to criticize him."

"I am going to marry you."

She laughed nervously. "I am going to be a private secretary to some one and support myself and my father. No, you are not going to marry me."

They were at the brick walk that led up to her doorway.

"Ellen, I am going to marry you!" he repeated. "I don't care what you say now. I shall prove myself. Whether or not you want me to do it, I shall have but one aim. I am coming back to claim you. I know that I have failed; I am starting all over again, and it's all new to me. But with you to think about and work for I can't help but succeed."

He took her small gloved hand. "Good-bye, Ellen, I love you."

"Good-bye, Harry. God bless you!"



## IV

A WEEK had gone by since Harry had stood on the steps of University Hall and faced the reality of his expulsion. It had at first surprised and later offended him that so little interest was taken in his predicament or his future. Stuyvesant Baring, to be sure, had spent an evening with him and had been helpful in his condolences and sympathetically indignant at the overbearing attitude of the dean. Also, he had seen Herrick, but that urbane gentleman had dismissed him with a triviality.

“Well, Harry, when you make your million, wherever you’re going, don’t forget your old friend,” he said. Then, a little more seriously: “I’m after that scholarship honor, old top, and I believe I’ll get it.”

But Harry met Felix Chapman one day and was a little embarrassed at his cordiality. In some way it was so much more genuine than the utterances of his intimates.

Fortunately, Baring decided to give up his single room and join forces with Clarence, a

situation that relieved Harry of his half interest in the Randolph suite and also gave him a little ready cash, for Baring bought most of the furniture, and Max, the second-hand poco, relieved him of the rest for a sum which exactly covered a farewell dinner with Clarence at the Touraine.

But the two days that he spent at New Bedford were the hardest. At first Phelps Gray was indignant. He rose abruptly from the divan where they were sitting before the library fire, and paced almost briskly several times up and down the room. "I shall see the dean myself," he ejaculated. "I have friends among the overseers. He shall hear of this. The expulsion of my son in this fashion is no light matter."

To his surprise, Harry found himself defending the dean's action. He would accept the situation with dignity; he hoped that his father would respect his decision. Reluctantly his father assented.

Harry picked up their talk again: "Perhaps it was a little stiff, coming as it did. But, father, let's look the facts in the face. I'm out of Harvard. The world is before me. I can't come and live with you; I must begin to lay my foundation for my life."

The older man did not follow closely the boyish phrases, but he caught their purport. "That's right, Harry, you can't rust away down here yet. Some day the old place will mean much to you. Now you must get your start. Have you given any thought to the matter?"

"There are several things," Harry replied. "There is the publishing business." His father nodded grave approval. "If there is not an opening there, I may consider a good bond house. And if nothing comes of these things," Harry continued, "I may go West. There should be a fine opportunity there for Eastern chaps."

"One of the New York State cities or Ohio somewhere? I hardly see the necessity."

"No, Chicago, or even farther. I mean the real West, the big new part of the nation."

"I doubt if success is any greater there than here."

"Perhaps. But, father, the point is, don't worry about me. To-morrow morning I hope to find the sort of thing I want. I have several concerns in view. To-night I shall go over them in my mind."

"How are your finances?"

"I could use some money," Harry admitted,

“just to tide me over. In a month or so I ought to be getting along very comfortably on my salary, although, of course, I can’t expect much.”

He watched his father seat himself stiffly at the broad desk and pluck a pen from a little shot-filled holder. He wrote slowly and then folded the oblong slip of blue paper. “I’m sorry, my boy, I can’t help you out more at this time. Certain unforeseen —”

Harry interrupted him. He dreaded the knowledge that he knew must come some day. Preserving the fold in the check, he thrust it into his pocket without glancing at the numerals. “Thanks, father.”

“If you need more — ”

“I know, I’ll come to you.”

Dinner over, Harry left almost immediately. In the hall he lingered for a few brief minutes while he put on his coat; there seemed so much that should be said, so little that he could say to the white-haired man beside him. All his young life this high, dark hall had been his playground. He recalled the deep, low closets under the stairs and the wonder with which he would pause and stare at the portraits of two Chinese merchants with whom his grandfather had done



much business in the great hong at Foochow. There was a hat rack of curiously carved teak, and in the far end under the broad landing a suit of Chinese armor with a grotesque mask that grinned horribly from beneath the lacquered helmet. With quick tenderness he kissed his father's thin cheek and felt his slight fingers grip his own. Then the door closed behind him. . . .

There was spring warmth in the sunshine as Harry walked across the Common. He had returned from New Bedford the previous evening and taken a room at the Parker House. A good night's sleep and a hearty breakfast had put him thoroughly to rights with the world; his confidence had risen in proportion, and already he began to plan the furnishings of the rooms he would take somewhere around Charles Street as soon as his work was definitely determined.

A middle-aged woman behind a small desk took his card. Harry mentioned the name of the editor.

"Your business, please."

The interrogation for a moment almost confused him; it offended him.

"A personal matter," he replied carelessly,

and turned his back to examine the book illustrations framed on the opposite wall.

In a minute she returned. "Mr. Fielding says he does not recall you. He is very busy. Unless it is a matter of great importance —"

Harry interrupted her with a gesture that spoke apology. "It is a matter of importance."

Again she disappeared and again he regarded the pictures.

"Come this way, if you please." The woman motioned with her pencil.

Mr. Fielding was a man of sixty, with scant gray hair and gold-rimmed spectacles through which peered eyes of extraordinary penetration.

"You are Mr. Gray? What can I do for you?" He spoke with obvious impatience.

"I have often heard Mr. Holman, my father's friend, speak of you. I am a son of Phelps Gray of New Bedford."

"Yes, I know Mr. Holman."

"I am coming to you," Harry continued, a trifle nettled by the evident impatience of Mr. Fielding, "to tell you that I am looking for a position. I should like to become associated with your company."

The editor sat down and motioned Harry to a seat.

“You say you want a position? What can you do? What has been your experience?”

Harry recounted his brief history, placing considerable emphasis on his fondness for literature and passing lightly over the mid-year catastrophe.

“Were you on any of the college papers during your stay at Harvard?”

Harry shook his head.

“Of course, if a lad wants to follow the publishing business there are many things that college can do for him,” Mr. Fielding continued, “as is the case in any activity he may choose. That is one function of a university — to prepare men not that they may start higher up, but that they may climb, once started, with more surety and celerity. Right now, however, I’m afraid I can’t do anything for you. I don’t see why you decided to try this sort of work,” he continued in a cold, even voice. “You haven’t had a business experience; you haven’t had any particular work at the university you could use. Why don’t you go to work for a newspaper, if you are interested in publishing?”

The interview was obviously at an end.

“I’m sorry, but your suggestion of a newspaper doesn’t appeal to me,” Gray replied. “Thank you, however, Mr. Fielding. It has been a pleasure to meet you.” Gravely he shook hands and before he had faced the door the editor was immersed in the stack of papers on his desk.

Harry walked slowly toward State Street. Somehow the immediate experience troubled him. As in college, so in this greater university of the world, his fellows failed to judge him by his self-appraisal.

But in the low-ceilinged offices of the bond house his card brought the gratifying response of an immediate invitation to enter one of the inner offices. A tall, well-built man of forty-five greeted him. Harry surveyed him with approval; the dark tweed suit, the white starched linen, and a single pearl in the deep-green four-in-hand were hall-marks of good taste.

“So you want a job?” the financier remarked. “Well, I’m sorry, but you’ve come at a rather bad time. I’d like to do something for you, but it’s impossible now — quite impossible.”

“I hardly expected to be turned down without



consideration. I believe I have certain qualifications that —”

“Doubtless you have, but the net of it is we’re not taking on any one.”

The member of the State Street bond house twisted the slender gold chain across his chest with shapely but strong fingers.

“I should be willing to take a nominal salary at the start,” Harry continued.

The other smiled grimly: “Doubtless you would. You’re not different from any other lad that’s just green out of college. It’s a big thing to get a chance at any salary. But you certainly don’t expect concerns to make places for college boys over the heads of their employees?”

“I didn’t say what I expected, but I did expect that there was a real place for a gentleman in a business of this sort.”

The older man laughed. “I like your self-assurance, Mr. Gray; properly directed, it will carry you a long way, but right now and here I’m afraid it won’t help you.”

They shook hands, and Harry found his way out of the office. His next two calls increased his discomfiture. At one place a curt refusal abruptly ended the interview, and at the other

seven dollars a week and the title of errand boy had been suggested.

The following morning he resumed his search of a job. The outcome was the same, and the late afternoon found him face to face with a sharp realization of his inadequacy.

The sun had sunk behind the roofs of Boylston Street, and the fine, clear yellow twilight filled the air. Already the puddles were sharpening with shell ice and the sidewalk rang sharply under his step. For a half hour Harry wandered in front of the shop windows, then he turned into one of the paths in the Common. Among the many dark figures walking hurriedly here and there, his eye suddenly spied one that seemed familiar. He quickened his step. It was Ellen. In a few minutes he was beside her.

At her name, Ellen turned. Her cheeks were red in the pinch of the sharp north wind, and her eyes were deep and misty. She carried a green baize bag that bulged with books. "Why, Harry, I hardly expected to see you so soon." She indicated the bag. "I am late to-night. I began my new work Monday. I am private secretary to Mr. Sears Reading of the Charitable Foundation."

"You are working?" he stammered.

"Indeed I am. And it's really splendid fun. Incidentally, even my small addition to the family purse is quite helpful."

"I'm looking for a job."

She gave him a fleeting glance — noticed that he looked pale and tired.

"I haven't had much success yet," Harry continued. "I used to think that all I had to do was to walk out and ask for one, but it's different now."

"Perhaps it's not a bad thing for you, Harry, that you should find out things as they are."

They crossed the broad path of Arlington Street and turned up Commonwealth Avenue. "Someway, I don't like to think of you working," he said.

"Perhaps it's because, deep in your heart, you consider work menial. I think the humblest work is sometimes the loftiest. I respect a man who can take the work that is given to him and build with it."

"You respect Clark because he is working his way through Harvard?"

She flashed a look of resentment at him. "I do respect Mr. Clark as I never have been able

to respect you, although there was a time when I wanted to. I said it was a good thing you were finding out things as they are; I might say it would be a good thing if you could find out yourself as you are."

Harry took her hands: "Ellen, I will do anything for you; anything you ask."

"I don't want you to be a man because of me, or because of any one else. Be a man for yourself, Harry. And, quite frankly, I wish you would stop behaving in this way toward me. It annoys me." She spoke sharply.

He wanted to explain. Then he realized that words would only involve him deeper. "The next time you hear from me it will be by letter," he said coldly. "I am leaving Boston." He stood with his hat in his hand at her street corner, and Ellen could not help admiring his fine head and the clear, wide-set eyes beneath the bold forehead. But she spoke almost indifferently: "Good-bye and good luck."

Without looking back, Harry walked down the street. He had a vague premonition that much water would pass over the mill wheel before they met again. And she had given him something to think about. After all, perhaps he



did expect too much of the world. "But if I am as good as I think I am I can show them," he muttered. "I can't do it here in Boston. I'll go to some place where no one knows me; that should prove what I have in me."

He went down the steps to the old grillroom. He ate sparingly and a curious reaction began to come over him. He knew that he loved Ellen, deeply loved her, and yet now he had a sense of freedom and a desire to defy that love. For weeks he had been pounded and beaten in daily battle. His old ideas had one by one been flouted. Save for his father there had been no touch of sympathy or understanding that he could recognize.

Life seemed suddenly hopeless; a feeling almost of panic took hold of him. Then he squared his shoulders; little muscles about his jaw tightened. Could Phelps Gray at that instant have seen his son he would have recognized in the young face the likeness of his own father.

Harry drank his coffee slowly. Having nothing else to do, he spent the rest of the evening at the theater.

The second act was commencing when he

entered the lobby. At the inner door he met Catewell and Hawley. They greeted him like a long-lost friend. "How goes the battle?" asked Hawley. "Where you working?"

"I'm going West to-morrow."

"Pleasure trip?" inquired Catewell.

"No, business," Harry answered, and then, as though the word pleased him, he repeated it — "business."

At the end of the performance he moved impatiently up the aisle. Ahead of him in the throng he caught sight of Arthur Clark. He was with another man whom Harry did not know. The sight of Clark kindled his rancor like a match touched to powder. In a moment all the hatred, jealousy, and disappointment of the past year burst into a flame. Vividly he remembered the night Clark had called him a quitter and he had taken the insult dumbly; he recalled their various collisions in regard to Ellen, and sharp-etched in his memory was the night at the restaurant when Clark had found him in a situation which he had seen fit to interpret as compromising. That episode Clark had in some way conveyed to the dean; doubtless it had been the basis for his insinuations to Ellen.

After the performance Harry walked aimlessly down the sidewalk to the alley beside the theater. Clark was standing at the corner.

"Hello, Gray," he called out. "Waiting for a little night life?"

A sudden cold fury seized Harry. Deliberately he walked over to where Clark stood: "What did you say?"

Clark regarded him oddly, obviously puzzled at the stern quality in Harry's voice. "Why, I asked you if you were waiting for a little night life. You needn't look so virtuous, Gray," he added. "You'll recall we have met after the theater before this."

"Do you remember," Harry demanded, "one time a few months ago you called me a quitter? You did, didn't you? Well, I didn't do to you what I should have done. That's one thing. In addition, I've learned what kind of a man you really are. Let me suggest to you that a gentleman doesn't lie about another man behind his back."

Clark's face reddened. "Are you trying to call me a liar?" he asked.

"I asked if you remember calling me a quitter." Harry's voice was low and vibrant. "Come

back here in the alley; I'm going to do to you what I ought to have done then."

"What's the trouble, Gray? I believe you've been drinking." Clark forced a thin smile. "You fool, I'm not going to fight you."

"Perhaps you will now."

With a sudden swing Harry swept the flat of his bare right hand against the other's face. Full in the mouth it caught him, and as Harry's hand fell back a thin trickle of blood ran down from Clark's upper lip over the even whiteness of his teeth. A little crowd had gathered, and as Clark started to return the blow a couple of bystanders thrust themselves between the two men.

"All right. All right," Clark assented. "Come, Gray." He spoke in a lower voice. "Let's get out of this."

They turned down the alley. Neither spoke. Past the stage door was a pocket cut in from the alley between two buildings. A yellow electric light burned dimly over a loading platform at its far end. Rough cobblestones gave an uneven footing and the ground was strewn with a litter of torn papers, with here and there a dark puddle of mud and water.



“This will do. Take off your coat!” There was a totally new note in Harry’s voice.

In a second both men were in their shirt sleeves. Clark, a fraction of a second quicker than Harry, seized the offensive and rushed his opponent back under a hail of blows. In the dim light, Harry saw Clark’s right shoot out. Instinctively he threw his head to one side and as the clenched fist passed over his shoulder he flung himself at his antagonist, smashing heavily against the baffling barrier of Clark’s defense. Then he saw an opening and swung with his right as Clark sprang free to deliver another blow. He felt his fist smash into the white face before him and saw his antagonist jolted backward. With a rush Clark recovered and sprang at him. Vainly Harry tried to counter. Clark feinted with his right and shot home a left uppercut. The blow seemed to shatter Harry’s vision; before his eyes sharp lights flashed and were gone. He reeled backward dazed and confused. Again a blow caught him full between the eyes. As though flung from a height, he crashed back against the brick wall behind and collapsed, a limp figure in the mire of the cobbled way.

With a hand slipping in the mud, he managed

to raise himself on his elbow. Bending low over him, Clark struck the upturned face. From the gashed upper lip the blood spurted. Far off he heard Clark's words: "This'll hold you for a while." Again the fist struck the bloody mouth, and Harry's head fell back against the stones.

For a moment Clark regarded the sprawled body at his feet. Then he turned and walked slowly away.

It was some minutes before Harry could get to his feet. With his handkerchief he wiped the blood from his face. His head ached dully, and his lip smarted where Clark's fist had bruised it. He leaned against the dark wall of a building to regain his strength. He had been beaten physically, but the result was a moral victory. He had carried himself well. With his head erect, he walked out of the alley. . . .

The lights were burning in office windows when, on the day following, Harry drove down to South Station with his baggage. He bought his ticket and a berth to Chicago. Suddenly a friendly hand slapped his shoulder; he turned quickly. It was Jack Dixon.

Conscious of a swollen lip and a black eye, Harry felt an inclination to escape the question

which seemed inevitable. But if Dixon noticed, he made no comment. "Well, Harry, where are you going?" he demanded.

Harry squared his shoulders. "I'm going West," he answered, "to find a job. I was fired, you know, at mid-year. I thought," he added candidly, "I was a little too good, and I didn't realize that Harvard was a lot too good for me."

Dixon put a hand on his shoulder. "Harry, old man," he said, "there are always a few fellows in every class who don't get the idea. You tried to lead a selfish life there and be happy. It can't be done. I'm sorry. I like you, and some day we'll meet again."

Their hands clasped in a firm grip. . . .

At a great gray stone hotel on Michigan Avenue, on the evening of his arrival, Harry dined in a room where water splashed over a fountain of colored glass and where fragments of talk and echoes of merriment from men and women at small tables accentuated his deepening sense of loneliness. Dinner over, he took a short walk on the broad avenue before the hotel, but wet snow driven before a cold wind from the lake discouraged him and he returned to the warmth and quiet of his room.

As he dressed next morning Harry did some hard thinking. The night before he had counted the slim sheaf of bills in his pocketbook; his funds were nearly exhausted. Within a few days at the most he must get work. The alternatives were a large or a small community. He must practice the most rigid economy: no longer did he feel confident to command a salary sufficient for luxuries. He was a product of the city, but he realized that he could not follow even remotely his former city existence. He decided on a small community — where, he did not know. Nor did he particularly care what kind of work might come his way.

A few years before, he had met a friend of the father of a boy he had been visiting. Luckily he remembered the name — John P. Carleton. Carleton lived in Chicago. Perhaps he could advise him.

When he came out from breakfast the lobby was filled with men. A few months ago he would have despised them, as he had despised all crowds. But to-day these loud-talking, conspicuously dressed individuals, chewing black cigars and arguing points brought up at some convention they were attending, impressed him. They



in their measure drank the wine of success. He was an outsider, a tyro in the grim game of life.

Back in his room, he wrote a brief, affectionate note to his father, explaining, he felt quite plausibly, his abrupt departure from Boston. There was real opportunity in the West, he wrote; he was confident that he had decided wisely. His heart misgave him as he put down the words; he thought of the feeble, gray-haired man who would read the letter before his study fire, and hot tears bleared his eyes. He added extravagant reasons for his confidence.

Harry telephoned John Carleton, recalling their past meeting. He was in Chicago for only a few days, he explained. It was his first visit. Would Mr. Carleton give him a word of advice? Mr. Carleton's voice was friendly. Harry might call on him that morning at eleven.

It was a quarter before the hour when Harry presented himself at Carleton's office. "Glad to see you, Gray," Carleton said. "Good of you to call on me. Long in town? Always like to have Harvard men drop in on me. I was '98."

Instinctively Harry felt drawn to this slender, dark-eyed man who greeted him with a courtesy

that seemed to make his call a matter of importance.

"I am here," Harry explained simply, "because I was fired at the mid-year, and I want a job."

"Why did you come to Chicago?"

Harry hesitated: "I tried to get work in Boston, but I couldn't get anything. I figured that I would do better to come where no one knows me. I don't want to work in Chicago even. I want to go to some small town and take a man's job."

Carleton watched Harry's face narrowly. "You've had some disappointments lately?"

"Yes."

"Is there a girl?"

The personal question did not offend him. "Yes."

"And you've come out here to see what stuff you have in you; to test yourself! I think you'll win out if you hold to your faith." He paused for a moment. "Do you really want to start at the bottom and work with your body as well as with your head?"

"That's exactly what I want."

Carleton leaned back in his chair. "This com-

pany, of which I happen to be the president, operates a number of coal mines in the southern part of the State. Our largest property is at Carbon." He wrote a few words on a memorandum sheet and handed it to Harry: "Here, take this. It will get you started. The rest is up to you."

Harry looked at the yellow sheet. It read:

DEAR COLBY: Give H. Gray a Job.

J. P. C.

"If you really want to fight this out," Carleton explained, "the less you may seem a protégé of mine the better. Colby is our general manager. He'll find out what you can do and put you at it." Carleton held out his hand. "Good luck, Gray. I hope to hear of you one of these days." . . .

The train to Carbon carried no sleeping cars, and dawn found Harry with haggard lines in his white face and eyes tired by loss of sleep. Wiping an outlook in the moist pane, he looked out. For miles the flat fields extended to the horizon. Clumps of trees lifted black skeletons; occasional roads twisted their frozen ruts of mud into the distance; cornfields brown with the

waste of last year's harvest edged the fences, and here and there a small farmhouse stood solitary and desolate in the dull dawn. The sun rose behind a pall of gray, a few streaks of rose glowing between heavy strata of cloud.

"Next station, Carbon!" called the conductor.

Slowly the train ground to a stop. The black shadow of the station building darkened the window.

It was cold with the raw first breath of day. Leaving his bags at the station, Harry walked along the single street.

Far down, three-quarters of a mile away, framed under the gaunt black limbs, was a slender tower of steel, a black silhouette against the somber sky. Reaching the mine, Harry pushed open the door of a small building marked "Office" and inquired for Mr. Colby. A stout, young man in a flannel shirt told him to wait.

Through the dingy glass in the window beside him Harry surveyed the setting of this new chapter of his existence. Slender and lofty, the tower of the tipple reared itself above the prairie. From high up in its steel structure slim cables sank down to the shaft mouth beneath. Near by, two tall brick stacks indicated the power house.



Other buildings clustered about the tipple, and beneath it in every direction were tracks and cars, empty or filled with coal. Coal smeared the landscape. In flurries the fine black dust eddied with every passing breeze from the tipple; coal dust covered the ground with an ebon blanket.

The mine manager arrived at seven-thirty. He was a small, spare man with a close-clipped red mustache and round, hard blue eyes that peered sharply from a weathered face.

Harry's hand fingered the letter in his pocket while he introduced himself. Suddenly he thrust it back. Why should he enter his first job under another's auspices? He would not present the letter; he would try his luck alone.

Simply he stated his case. He wanted a job. He wanted to learn the coal business. Could Mr. Colby use him?

The mine manager looked at him closely. "You don't care what you do?" he asked. "You ain't a miner; that's easy to see. What can you do?"

Harry met the question squarely. "I'm strong," he said simply. "All I want is enough to live on. Any job you have will be appreciated."

Colby eyed him, still puzzled. "Well, I can't say as we need any men right now," he finally said, "but you can find Charley Plunkett, and tell him I said you was to load. You'll have to get some clothes and your outfit. Where you living?"

"I haven't found any place yet."

Colby meditated. The phenomenon of this soft-spoken young man fascinated him. "John Hagen might take you in. He lost his boarder last week."

Harry made mental note of the name. He had not asked the pay he was to receive — in fact, he hadn't thought about it. Had he done so, he might have compared this meeting with another one in Boston.

He was not yet ready to appreciate the significance of the comparison.

Another day had dawned. Night had swept clean the sky, and the sun had risen in a vault of faultless blue. Ten minutes before the blast of the great whistle on the power house Harry waited at the shaft mouth. Clean as the sky were his blue overalls and jumper, and the white canvas pit cap on his head was fresh from the box in the company store. He carried a pick

and shovel and a shiny tin lunch box. He filed down past the checker, gave his number and found himself standing with a dozen men at the square black rim of the man hoist.

Out of the corner of his eye he regarded them, and secretly admired the greasy black of their clothes, the black of their caps, and the battered aspect of their dinner pails. On their part they gave him a more frank inspection, an inspection touched with the same tinge of curiosity that had affected the mine manager.

The hoist, a sideless elevator, hung like a bucket by its handle, rose suddenly out of the shaft, and Harry and a dozen others crowded on it. For a second the sunshine slanted on blackened figures; then, as though falling, the hoist slipped suddenly downward. Pit lamps in cap visors flared with sooty flame in the draft; the walls of the shaft, wet and black, seemed to stream upward; a pressure came in Harry's ears. The hoist came to a stop, and before him a long tunnel stretched into the blackness, occasional electric lights magnifying the distance.

The sun had set when the man hoist carried them to the top. In the distant west the pale amber of the afterglow brightened a sky already

faintly whitened with stars. But to Harry's eyes, after the long hours of velvet blackness and blank silence, the world seemed filled with light and sound and vast spaciousness. His hands were black and the palms and fingers pained from blisters. Black also with dust and oil and sweat were his clothes and pit cap.

As he walked up the long street from the mine to John Hagen's house he recalled, as in a dream, the hours he had slaved beside cavernous cars which he filled with coal from the gleaming shattered pile at the room end. Plunkett, a taciturn, lantern-jawed man in charge of that section of the mine, had led him through a mile of labyrinthine tunnels to his working place. In a few brief words he had sketched his work, and at the close of day led him back through the black maze to the man hoist.

His body ached as he plodded up the road, but a sense of peace came over him as he turned in at the gate of Hagen's yard. He washed himself in the basin beside the kitchen sink and hung his blackened working clothes in the lean-to. Alice Hagen, a slender, good-looking girl of eighteen, was moving between the table and the stove, cooking the dinner and setting the table.



Harry sat down opposite the scale master. Presently Alice joined them, and when dinner was over the men smoked their pipes while the girl cleared the table and washed the dishes.

There was a sameness in the days that followed. In a few weeks Harry found himself able to follow the dark corridors of his section of the mine as a man at night moves through the familiar streets of a city. In the long hours he grew accustomed to the silence, and his ears began to catch the faint, trickling sounds of seeping gas, the knocking of cracking strata far above his head, and the soft hiss of the air pipe — sounds at first unnoticed. But chiefly he was aware of the constant change in his body. His hands had grown hard and leathery, the soft muscles of his back and arms had changed as into cords of ductile steel; he had become lean and powerful.

The evenings were of two sorts. At first he smoked his pipe with John Hagen and went early to bed. Then one night he and Hagen walked together to the poolroom and thereafter he alternated his evenings between the Hagen kitchen and the warm tobacco-filled room where Pete Petorolos dispensed his foaming bottles of

illicit beer. In the hazy atmosphere the men leaned back in their chairs against the broken plaster of the walls and drank their beer from the bottle, while Pete's wife, a huge slattern Croatian, played worn records of cheap dance music on the battered phonograph. Harry gradually began to know, on terms of easy intimacy, men whom he never encountered during his working days: machine men, shot firers, and the drivers of the mine locomotives, Americans and foreigners — men of every breed and instinct.

At first he thought but little of his past life, so suddenly thrust behind him. Then gradually dawned on him the realization of a new self that was being created. The realization brought no particular satisfaction. He had come, broken by the humiliation of disappointment, to try himself in a new environment. The new life suited him; he was content to lead it undisturbed.

Spring came with lengthening days and soft, moist scents at dawn and evening. On Sundays he walked out through the level country, often alone, occasionally with a companion, and once with Alice Hagen. He had written to his father a sprightly letter, suggesting somehow that he was enduring a brief apprenticeship in

order to fit him for some high station in the industry. The letter lacked sincerity. He dared not contemplate the future. But it was necessary to explain in some manner his new vocation to the gray-haired man who would read his words before the study fire. Once also he had written to Ellen. Far back in his brain he realized that she was the motivating force that held him here, but he made no mention or suggestion of the thought in his brief sentences; he wrote rather as though his life had been established permanently in Carbon.

It was Saturday night, and the phonograph ground out its blatant melodies. A larger crowd than usual lined the walls of Pete's poolroom. The air was blue with biting smoke, and the bare floor was slippery with the slop of spilled beer. Harry and Hagen were in a corner talking the small talk of the mine. Through the door came and went a continuous stream of men.

The beer was heady, and there were a few who had sampled the brown quart bottles that Pete kept in the rear room. High above the tumult of voices and the scraping of the worn steel needle of the phonograph rose the voice of Red Devon. In his right hand he held a quart bottle

of beer, his broad scarnailed thumb checking the foamy contents. Kicking a chair out of his path, he swung into the open space in the center of the room. "Let's dance," he shouted.

An old felt hat was pulled aslant his forehead, throwing his broad face into shadow. The throat of his shirt was open, disclosing his corded neck and hairy chest. Like a man misshapen by muscular development, he swayed as his small blue eyes fastened now on one and now on another of the men around him with an expression more suggestive of insanity than intoxication. He was one of the mine-timber men, strong as the beams of oak his sledge drove home beneath weakened roofs.

The crowd regarded him with apathy, Harry with idle curiosity. Their eyes met.

"Come out an' dance, you." He waved the bottle at Harry. Then, as he saw Harry ignore him, he strode heavily across the floor.

"Damn you, you city —" The sentence trailed off in a flood of vileness.

A curious silence followed. The phonograph record ended and the needle "weasped" raucously until some one pushed the stop. Red Devon was the mine bully. His companions



were accustomed to his drunken abuse and violence. But to-night his demonstration was directed against this newcomer. The crowd watched the baiting, wondering how far Red would go; what the stranger would do.

With another burst of invective, Devon pointed the bottle at Harry and withdrew his thumb from the mouth. A foamy spurt of beer shot out as from the nozzle of a siphon bottle. The aim was true. The creamy deluge struck Harry square in the face and slopped down across his chest.

The silence in the room was complete. Wiping the beer from his face, Harry rose slowly from his chair and pointed a long finger at his tormentor.

“Devon” — he spoke in a low, unnatural voice — “you’re drunk, but, by God, if you do that again or call me any more names I’ll smash you.”

Red’s small blue eyes narrowed, and a deep flush flooded his face. With unexpected suddenness his arm swung in a quick half-circle and the bottle shot from his hand. There was a sharp shatter of broken glass as it shattered against the wall, and at the same instant a thin

red line began slowly to trickle from Harry's forehead where the spinning neck had nicked him as it passed.

With a bound Harry cleared the space between them. All the weeks of his arduous labor served him. Lean as a panther, he knew that he was fit. And in the small eyes that peered at him he saw the cowardice of the bully momentarily transformed to unthinking passion by the fumes of cheap whisky.

There was no hesitating. Confusing his opponent by feinting with his right, Harry shot his left to the head, jolting Devon backward. Like stampeded cattle, the watchers pressed against the walls, clearing the floor. But the blow was too high for a knockout.

With a rush Devon dived forward, his head bowed. Harry leaped to one side, and as the man flung past him his fist again crashed against the great red head, and he saw Devon straighten, dazed bewilderment in his face.

"Look out!" shouted a voice. "His knife!"

Devon's right hand had slipped down to his belt. There was the flash of a short steel blade in an upward thrust.

As the warning sounded Harry saw the move

of his antagonist. A heavy wooden chair stood at his elbow. Seizing the back with both hands, he swung it above him. The electric light shivered into darkness. There was a splintering of wood, a sharp crash, and abrupt silence. Matches here and there struck yellow spurts of flame. In the dim light he saw Devon, a crumpled heap upon the floor.

"You fixed him fine, Harry," said John Hagen — "the big bum."

They were walking home through the starlight. In the liquid purple of the west the scimitar of a new moon shone white and sharp as steel. Soft breezes rustled among the shadowy branches of the buckeyes.

They turned into the gate, their feet rattling on the board walk. From the kitchen a yellow square of lamplight framed the window.

"But look out for 'im," continued Hagen. "That's my thinking. He'll not be forgetting the thrashing you gave him to-night."

They stepped into the sudden warmth of the kitchen. Alice Hagen was sewing in a rocking-chair beside the table, a mass of rough-dried garments piled on the red and white tablecloth.

She looked up as the men entered and a little

startled cry burst from her lips: "You're hurt!"

Hagen threw out his chest. His boarder had become an object of pride. "I'll say that Red Devon's worse!" he commented.

"Red Devon!" The girl turned a frightened look at Harry. "I hate that man. He's always pestering me — the big bum!"

She was busy with a basin and warm water from the kettle on the back of the stove. "Sit down here," she commanded.

Harry felt her firm fingers deftly move about his temple. "There, that'll do," she commented: "just a scratch."

For a second their eyes met as she leaned forward to look at him. Then, with sudden consciousness, she turned away.

In the corner Hagen was still commenting on the battle: "Crowned him with a chair! If I'm not telling you the holy truth, he looked like a cave-in."



## V

THE weeks following his fight with Red Devon passed uneventfully for Harry. He had made a dangerous enemy, but he had made friends as well. The miners looked at him with new respect. He spent less and less time at Pete's poolroom and more with Alice Hagen. He found himself looking forward to the evenings when, while Alice mended, he would read aloud. Sometimes they walked for an hour or two in the damp coolness.

In August, one sultry morning when thunderclouds pressed heavily over the flat landscape, Harry was called up out of the mine to Colby's office.

"You're Plunkett's assistant; assistant boss of No. 3," the little mine manager stated. Then he spat heavily on the floor and the interview was over.

His new duties freed Harry from much of the physical labor to which he had grown accustomed, and at first he missed this outlet

for his energies. Now, however, he was able to move at will throughout his section of the mine, and, under Plunkett's laconic tutelage, he rapidly grasped the details of the vast operation.

Of the future he felt a helpless uncertainty. The far horizon was still unbroken by any land-fall. Like the rim of an empty sea, in the center of which he struggled shipwrecked, it seemed to surround him. In the near waters floated the wreckage of the past. And through all his thoughts moved Ellen Davenport, now like a memory of some one gone forever from his life, now like an urge to carry strongly forward to an ultimate reward. He had set himself at least a year of work at Carbon. Perhaps by then he would hear from Carleton and advancement honorably won would remove him from his exile. And then Alice Hagen would move faintly across the screen of his mind, a strong, tender companion who made life tenable in this hard environment.

One evening late in August he found a letter waiting for him. The address was typewritten, and in the upper left-hand corner of the envelope was the firm name of the Holman partnership in small black letters. It was the first

time he had heard from Holman since the day he rudely swept out of his office in Boston. As Harry broke open the envelope he felt himself flush at the recollection.

He read the letter twice. Then he walked to the door and looked eastward at the darkening night. A convulsive tremor shook his shoulders. With black hands he brushed the hot drops from his cheeks. His father had died three weeks ago, Holman wrote. They had found him dead in his bed one morning. There could have been no suffering. No one had known Harry's address until Holman found one of Harry's letters from Carbon among his father's papers. The paragraph that followed concerned his father's affairs. Apparently they were worse than even Holman had anticipated. Holman was struggling to unsnarl the tangle; but this might take months to accomplish. He closed the letter with words of sympathy, and the assurance that should Harry require it his help would be always available.

There was a sound, and Harry turned. Alice had come into the room. He handed her the letter. She read it slowly. Then her hand went out to him. For a few long moments he

held it; there was comfort and understanding in the pressure of the small, strong fingers.

When he reached the mine bottom the following morning he turned down the main entry and struck out in a long swinging stride over the smoothly beaten dust between the rails. Since his elevation to be Plunkett's assistant the boss of Section 3 had left more and more of his duties to the silent young man who seemed to catch on with surprising quickness.

As he walked along the path his lamp cast flickering shadows on the vast avenue of props that lined the tunnel and on the massive timbers across the roof. With the regularity of city blocks, but at much shorter intervals, the "rooms" turned at right angles to the right and left, other tunnels being driven a certain distance in from the main entry through the deep black seam of coal, each separated from the rooms on either side by a "barrier pillar" or thick wall of coal. Far down in the headings of some of the rooms were soft, yellow points of light where men were working, and when he stopped for a minute he could hear the whining rasp of the electric undercutting machines carving out a deep aperture level with the floor



beneath the coal breast in the room end so that at night the shot firers might blast down the tons of unsupported coal and by that much extend the room deeper into the seam.

At a brattice door, where the current of ventilation was diverted, he stopped for a moment to chat with the old doorkeeper, whose duties consisted in opening and closing the door at the passage of each train. There was the dull clang of a gong far down the entry, and the doorkeeper swung open the big door. Filling the tunnel with its bulk, an electric locomotive roared past, the trolley striking blue and yellow sparks from the low-hung wire. Crouched behind the controller sat the driver, the flame of his light bent back like a sooty comet in the breeze. Behind the engine rattled past a long string of square black cars heavy with coal.

Harry walked on behind the retreating train. There had been a "fall" somewhere in a room heading in a big panel or division of the section, and the timber gang had already gone to shore up the roof. He would see what was being done and report to Plunkett. There was a flicker of lights and the sound of ax and sledge as he turned a final corner and stumbled over a pile

of broken rock. The roof in the room end had let go, and the floor was piled to the height of a man with great gray slabs of shale, some of them a ton in weight. High above was a lofty vault of gleaming gray stone, and in this opening the timbermen were working, filling in the high aperture with a crib of timbers that rested on a stockade of heavy props which they had placed on either side of the room.

Far up in the mass of timbers Red Devon, his half-stripped body gleaming with sweat, directed the hoisting and placing of the beams. With long, deft strokes of his ax he trimmed the butts of the timbers while others sledged them fast into place. Conscious of a new light in the darkness of the room, he looked down at Harry and as quickly shifted his eyes again to his work as he recognized the face beneath the pit lamp.

It was a fleeting glance, but as Harry turned away to retrace his steps he recalled its malevolence.

Through his months of work in the mine, Harry had long ago learned his way through every room entry and crosscut as a man intuitively knows the streets and lanes of his native village. There was a geometric regular-

ity that made the whole system intelligible, and he no longer felt the darkness and the depth of rock above him as appalling forces.

Instead of returning by the main entry, he struck up through an abandoned working and, feeling his way carefully over a pile of fallen rock, came sharply on a barrier of smooth white boards that completely blocked the end of the tunnel. In the center of the obstruction was a small door a few feet above the ground. Pushing it back along its grooves, he squirmed through the opening and closed it behind him. The air was very still and brilliantly clear. On either hand a huge tunnel extended. The roof for the greater part was unsupported, but here and there rose some lofty props covered with the moist white fungus of decay. The remains of an old track and a few battered and crumbling ties were scattered along the floor, and here and there were frequent piles of gray rock, each pile matched by a gap in the gray roof above.

He took his lamp from his cap and held it high above him. Far off to the right, where the tunnel dipped slightly, was the glint of a pool of water, black as glass. The tunnel was an

old abandoned air course that he had one day discovered on the blue print of the mine and had often used as a short cut to the bottom.

Picking his way over the uneven floor, a ten-minute walk brought him to another brattice in the side of the air course. Here another sliding panel pushed aside at his touch and, climbing through it, he found himself at the head of a worked room, a couple of minutes' walk from the foot of the man hoist. It was late in the afternoon, and the men of the day shift crowded the main entry around the bottom waiting for the hoist to lift them to the upper world. Harry was standing by the scale house, a rough board room built in a crosscut, waiting for Hagen.

"Hey, Harry!" a voice called above the sound of many voices, and Plunkett pushed through the crowd. "There's another fall up in East Panel. The timber gang have gone over there. I'll go with 'em, and if anything more happens to-night you come down. I'll leave word to have some one telephone you."

Harry assented.

He was glad that Plunkett, perhaps under the prod of conscience, had elected to visit this



new fall, but further trouble that night seemed a remote possibility.

After dinner Sam Dawson dropped into the Hagens' kitchen. Dawson was a newcomer at the mine, a young engineer employed by the company as a mine surveyor. Both Harry and Alice had found him a pleasant companion on their Sunday walks and a congenial addition to their evenings in the Hagen kitchen.

For an hour they talked of many things, but Dawson finally began quietly to dominate the conversation, and the other two found themselves silently listening as he unfolded the hopes and ambitions that had led him to Carbon. As he talked a light seemed to kindle his blue eyes. Alice had laid aside her sewing and leaned back in her chair, her hands clasped in her lap, her eyes far away in the magic lands that Dawson was describing.

"This is only a stepping-stone," he told them. "There are practical things here I must learn; some money I must save. Then I shall push on. There's the whole world to choose from, and this work of mine can carry me anywhere. I've been reading about South America, and perhaps that's where I'll go next. There are

great railroads to be built over the Andes, vast projects in tremendous rivers. And there's China; there's a place for the young men of to-day, a nation with a civilization centuries old ready for a rebirth into one of the greatest nations of the world. Suppose her undeveloped man power were combined with modern machinery. The thought is simply staggering!"

"I may lead out my life here," said the girl simply.

Dawson did not hear her low-pitched comment.

"And Australia," he continued, "a country as big as the United States, with every conceivable resource and a population less than that of New York City. There's a field for you: mining, hydroelectric developments, irrigation!"

"What is your final aim?" Harry broke in. "After you have had a hand in these big things in all these places — what then?"

"My aim? Why, I want to be an engineer of international reputation." His face became very earnest as he spoke. "I want men to speak of 'the big job that Dawson did' with this project or that. Think of the years

Goethals's name will stick with the Panama Canal. That is the right kind of monument for a man!"

Harry caught the enthusiasm. "I used to think," he said, "that what I wanted was to have enough money to belong to a few good clubs and live in comfort all my days in a big city with some work to occupy me and not enough to bother me. Now I don't know what I want, but I know I don't want that. Go on, Dawson."

"Well," Dawson continued, "it puts some excitement into life. Think of slaving for months in the heat and muck of some tropic jungle and then one day it's all over and the battle's won and the big shiny cars go skimming over the rails that you almost died for. Lord, but it makes me tingle to think of the thrill of it."

"There's plenty of struggle and death here at Carbon," interpolated the girl.

"You bet there is. And I often think, when I see those cars of coal going up the shaft, that we fellows are the boys behind the industry of the nation. By George, it's we who put that mile-a-minute speed into the Twentieth Century

Limited. We melt the iron ore and make the steel for skyscrapers and battleships.”

The telephone rang sharply, then a second ring followed the first. “That’s our ring,” said Alice. “Who can be calling us so late?”

She hurried to the telephone. “It’s for you, Harry.”

He got the message and came back across the room, a worried look on his face. “It’s Plunkett,” he explained. “He’s been down all evening. Says there’s a squeeze starting in East Panel. I must go down and get on the job. Sounds like trouble.”. . .

A mine locomotive was standing on a siding near the foot of the hoisting shaft, and Harry climbed into the driver’s seat, set the trolley, and slowly threw over the controller. A few hundred feet from the entrance to East Panel he parked the machine on a siding.

In the early days of his tutelage Harry had often pored over the great blue print of the workings. The mine was laid out on a system of panels or units, each panel representing a great rectangle of coal through the center of which two parallel entries or tunnels were driven. The result was a great ribbed area



and the surrounding wall of "barrier pillars" protected adjoining panels, for if too much coal were removed in any panel the roof might start to cave in, but the area of collapse would be limited.

At the mouth of East Panel a huge tangle of copper trolley wires was piled in the entry. Emergency electric lights rigged on the props gleamed brightly, and as Harry approached, a gang of men trundled a flat car laden with rails out of the mouth of the left entry.

Plunkett was giving orders in a high, excited voice.

"Them falls this morning was the start." He turned to Harry. "Might have knowed it. Then just as you went out to-night Mike comes to me and says his locomotive jumps the tracks last three trips right in the middle of the panel. I walks through and knocks out my lamp on a beam where I knows there ought to be three feet clear head room. Then I hears her. Squeeze, I sez. And an hour ago I knows the panel's done for. We're getting out all the track and wire we can before she lets go. Sixteen timbermen in there getting out timbers, and there's forty-two more men working at the

rails and wires. Better go and look her over."

Robbed of too much coal, the supporting pillars within the panel had proved inadequate to carry the vast weight of the four hundred feet of rock that pressed down upon the panel. Slowly the great strata were bending, and the pressure downward through the barrier pillars was pushing up the floor. Resistlessly floor and ceiling were closing like the jaws of a vise. Within ten hours, perhaps in an hour, would come a sudden rending crash, and, if the barrier pillars held, the roof of the entire panel would break clean and close down forever on that section of the mine.

As Harry walked up the entry his ears began to catch a sharp tumult of unusual sounds. Louder they grew as he advanced, loud splitting sounds far above him in the overlying rock, and here and there in the room heads sudden thunderous crashes as great slivers of stone were flung down. His head struck a roof beam. He was nearing the center of the panel where the floor and roof were pressing closest together. A tingling sensation against his hand caused him to look sharply at the glistening coal wall beside him. Under the terrific pressure the

coal was disintegrating, and from the black surface a spray of fine coal particles shot out like sharp hailstones. Everywhere in the tumult of unnatural sound were men's voices; pit lamps glowed like fire-flies in a marsh.

A jagged splinter of stone crashed to the track in front. On either hand the sturdy oak props were bowed and splintering. In a room at his right a shock like a high explosive shook the air and he saw a gang of men dash tumbling to safety, an avalanche of stone and dust filling the room behind them. Flat car after flat car pushed past him. Up to the final hour the men were salvaging the steel and copper. It was a splendid retreat in the face of inevitable disaster. He joined the workers and with a crowbar tore up the rails from the tracks in the farthest rooms. Twice he helped push a loaded flat car through the entry to the unloading place beyond the barrier pillar, and each time the space between floor and roof had lessened. The last time he could barely pass stooping almost double.

"Order out the men from the far side!" called Plunkett.

Harry started back down the long left entry.

In the few minutes since he had last passed the spot a fall of rock had blocked the tunnel. Through a crosscut he made for the right entry. It was open, but there was hardly three feet clearance in the middle. The roar of the rending strata pounded continuously.

"Run!" he shouted to some men beside the track. They dropped their tools and dashed for safety. Again he shouted to another group, and they joined the fleeing procession. He counted them as they passed; there were still four timbermen somewhere ahead of him.

Out of the gloom three men came pitching headlong down the track, their lights bobbing drunkenly as they fled. "Run!" they shouted at him. "She's going!"

"Where's the other man?" he shouted.

"Twenty-three, right," they called as they fled past him. "He's buried; can't get him."

Harry dashed ahead and turned into the black mouth of Room 23. The floor was piled high with rock fragments, and, a few feet in, a gray pile reared like a wall from side to side. With all his might he shouted, and a distant voice answered behind the rock barrier. With a leap he half scaled its side and crawled along



the top. Above him a huge slab hung balanced on a perpendicular splinter that a touch might dislodge. In the soft light of his lamp he saw Red Devon down on the floor beyond the fall. He was crawling heavily.

"Hurt?" Harry shouted.

"My leg's broke!" Devon yelled back.

In a minute Harry was at his side. They climbed the steep face of the fall and wriggled cautiously along the top, Devon's leg dragging limply. Harry half carried, half dragged him down the other side to the room mouth and turned down the entry. Devon uttered a quick, awed cry: "She's shut!"

In the dim light they peered ahead. Slowly converging, the planes of the floor and roof of the mine had closed. They were entombed.

A mad panic surged through Harry's brain, then came the dullness of despair. He felt sick and the sweat ran in rivulets from his forehead.

On his face on the black floor Devon was praying, mad with fear. Harry bent over him.

"Come!" he shouted. "I know a way, if you can make it!"

Devon tried to rise, and Harry seized him as he reeled in fear and pain. Again they stag-

gered through the inferno of falling rock. Once they scaled a fall as high as the one behind which Devon had been struck down in 23. Each minute the roaring increased. They could no longer hear each other speak. Suddenly at the end of an abandoned room into which they had penetrated gleamed the white wall of a brattice. Harry thrust back the sliding door and cautiously they wormed through the opening. Devon fell a limp mass on the floor beyond.

Far off came the roar of the falling roof. There was a sharp, splintering shock. A few bits of stone tinkled down from the roof. Then silence.

Harry sat down and wiped his face. "Well, she's closed at last. We got out about in time, Devon."

The man, collapsed at his feet, looked at him through his small, unwinking eyes. . . .

"You bet I wouldn't have gone back after him." Hagen softly pounded the table to emphasize his words. "That dirty dog Devon."

The story had finally been told, for the inquisitive Hagen had wormed from Harry, bit by bit, the details of the rescue. To the mine manager

Harry had simply reported that he found Devon with his leg broken and brought him out through the abandoned air course. As for Devon, his dull brain was still pondering why the man whom he considered his enemy had risked his life to save him.

But it was Alice Hagen who saw in Harry's slim recital of that terrible hour qualities that threw a new light upon him. . . .

It was Sunday and at breakfast Harry proposed a walk across country. With an apron about his waist he helped Alice with the dishes that they might make an early start. For an hour they tramped across the level fields. Covies of quail rose before them from the shelter of a cornfield; high in the sky crows cawed, wheeling in the warm sunshine.

Harry and Alice were happy. Neither knew why and neither tried to guess. They sat down to rest and for a few minutes neither spoke.

"How long are you going to stay in Carbon?" Alice asked. The abruptness of her question startled him.

"I haven't thought much about it, Alice," he answered. There was another silence, then he continued: "I came here to get away from cer-

tain influences, to try myself out. I have gained certain things, but I'm a coward about going back. It must be done, I suppose — I can't be a miner forever — but it means starting up from the bottom again at home, in Boston, or in some other big city."

"I'll miss you," she said simply.

Why should he go back? he demanded of himself. He knew that Ellen was the answer, but did that justify his return? Ellen did not love him, so she had told him; he was alone; he was poor. And here was a girl whose gentle presence made his life a calm progression of happy days. Why should he abandon what was near and possible for this elusive, unformed vision of the future?

He turned his face away and fought the words that would not be silenced. Her hand beside his knee crumpled the yellow leaves. He seized it and held it to his lips. "Alice, do you really care for me? Do you love me?"

She looked at him gravely. "I don't know," she answered.

He helped her to her feet. Suddenly he caught her in his arms and pressed her close to him. Her face was upturned to his, and for a long



moment he felt the warmth of her lips against his own. The fragrance of her hair intoxicated him, the strength of her firm young body thrilled through him.

Then he felt her hand against his chest, gently pushing him from her. His arms freed her. She dropped down on the leaves and covered her face with her hands. He crouched before her and lifted them from her face.

“What’s the matter, Alice?” he pleaded.

“Oh, I don’t know,” she murmured. “I don’t understand you when you’re like that.”

“I couldn’t help it.” . . .

In the weeks that followed, Dawson became an even more frequent visitor at the Hagen kitchen. He had sent away for a couple of books on South America, and read aloud from them to Alice. His presence relieved and yet sometimes annoyed Harry. “I shall leave here by the first of the year,” Dawson announced one evening. “I have got about all there is to get out of this mine work, and South America pulls me harder and harder. The firm I worked for as a draftsman when I first got out of college has a big job on the Amazon, and I’ve written to Brownell, my old boss. If he comes through

with something, I'll take it. If he doesn't, I shall go anyway and pick up something."

"I guess I'll be about through myself by then," Harry commented. "I've been dreading getting back to civilization, but it's got to be done some day, and I think I've learned to see straight."

Alice watched their faces with troubled eyes.

"Where are you going, Harry?" Dawson asked.

"I don't know."

That evening he wrote a long letter to Clarence. It was the first time he had written to any of his old friends, the first definite expression of his yearning to hear some news from the pleasant life that he had so stupidly cast aside. Then he wrote to Ellen. It was a straightforward letter telling of his life at Carbon. He ended with the hope that she had not wholly forgotten him and that she would be glad to see him should he return to Boston.

It was two weeks before he heard from Clarence; the letter was long and rambling. He wrote that he had re-established himself in his class, without conditions. Herrick was actually achieving the honors he desired and he had become much set up over his scholarship. Then

came a few passages that Harry read again and again.

"Your old flame, Ellen Davenport," Clarence wrote, "is very gay, and the fellows are all rushing her. She has some job she works at and is quite stuck on herself about it, but she's getting better-looking every day, and if you don't come back you'll find the barn door open and the bird flown." Harry ignored the metaphor and skipped the next few paragraphs. "Speaking of E. D. again," Clarence continued, "whatever happened to you and Arthur Clark? For a while they seemed to have some fight on about something, and I thought it was on account of some row you had with Clark. But Clark is going strong now."

Well, what chance had he? Even if he should go back to Boston, how could he dare to ask Ellen to share his poverty? Yet against this feeling of hopelessness was the stronger urge of youthful optimism and confidence. For a week he pondered over the course he would pursue. And the end of the week still found him undetermined.

Meanwhile with Alice he had been drifting. If he were to marry her, he must choose a life

that would be familiar to her; he could adapt himself better than she. But he did not want to bind himself. And on the far horizon he saw Ellen.

One day he met Dawson in the mine.

"I got my letter from Brownell," Dawson said. "Says there's a fine job for me on a big electric development they are starting at Rio."

"When are you going?"

"There's nothing doing until April. Takes a month to get down there. Looks like sticking it out at Carbon until March. Now I know I've got the chance, I'm itching to be off. How long do you plan to stay here?"

"There's nothing more for me here. In a month or so I'm going back to Chicago or Boston to hunt a job."

"Seems to me," Dawson commented, "it ought to be pretty soft for you to get set pretty with all the friends you've got."

"I thought so once."

"I want to see the world and hammer out a place for myself. I guess you'd rather settle down somewheres."

"Sometimes it's harder to settle down than it is to wander."



Dawson turned the thought slowly. "Perhaps you're right. Gosh, but I'd rot at a desk." . . .

A drizzling rain fell from a dull sky when Harry stepped off the man hoist. He flicked out the light of his pit cap and tramped heavily through shallow puddles to the cinder path that followed the straight line of the long street.

John Hagen's house looked tiny and squalid in the half light. He and Hagen would have supper in the small kitchen. Then Alice would wash the dishes; he could smell the steam of the soapy water. Later he would read for a while and then go to bed. And to-morrow the whistle would blow in the still darkness of dawn and another day would pass, and another, and another.

After dinner he put on his hat and strode down the street to Pete's. The phonograph was playing, the crowd lined the walls, the single electric light shone through the mist of tobacco smoke. He bought a bottle of beer and took a chair next to Plunkett. For almost the first time he realized his loss of real companionship; his craving for conversation about the world which he had known. He went home early.

Plunkett was laid up with a sprained ankle,

and the responsibility of the section fell entirely on Harry's shoulders. This was nothing new; nevertheless he felt the increased burden, and for several nights he had remained in the mine for an hour after the day shift had gone to the top.

By Wednesday the coal hoisted on the first two days had registered a record run. He was early at the mine, and as he waited for the man hoist he pressed his back against the wall of the hoisting engineer's shanty and drank in the faint warmth of the thin yellow sunshine of the opening day. The sky was clear, a pale wintry blue, and shell ice sparkled in the puddles.

As the hoist carried him swiftly down the black shaft he mentally planned the long day ahead, and when he reached the bottom he struck off with a fast stride to the farthest workings. The even temperature of the mine, which remained constant regardless of changing seasons, seemed filled with agreeable warmth after the frosty sharpness of the outer world. For a few minutes he stopped in a heading where there had been a fall the day before. During the night the timbermen had braced the weakened roof. Twice he entered the rooms where the loader

would later fill their empty cars from the pile of blasted coal at the headings, and tested for gas along the floor with his safety lamp. But the small flame within the wire gauze burned unaffected and told him that the air was pure.

It was noon before his inspection was completed. He stretched out on a pile of props for a brief rest before eating his lunch. Suddenly he sat up and sniffed. Then he studied the flame of his lamp, burning brightly where he had stuck it in the side of a prop. The air between him and the light was crystalline. Again he smelled it with a long inhalation.

Faint, but definable, a sweet, pungent aroma tainted the air current. It was wood smoke. He seized his lamp and thrust it into the clip in his cap brim. The smell of smoke was no stronger, but its presence was unmistakable.

More feared than any other disaster was a fire in the mine.

As he ran forward the smell grew stronger, the heavy reek of burning pine. Far ahead of him a pin point of light bobbed in the blackness. Some one was coming.





STRUGGLING WITH HIS AWKWARD BURDEN





## VI

“HEY!” yelled the runner, his voice strained high with excitement. “Fire in six west! It’s in the brattice; the whole damn place has caught! I’ll telephone bottom!” He darted past on his way to the telephone.

Harry broke into a run and did not halt until he came to a wide door which blocked the entry. The doorkeeper had evidently deserted his post. Harry pushed open the big panel. Then he understood. Like a soft fog, the smoke filled the entry; white and blinding, it poured, moving at right angles on the far side of the door. The smoke was moving in the wrong direction! It should be traveling with the air from left to right, away from the bottom of the mine. In a flash he understood. The fire, wherever it was, had burned away a brattice, and the air current, short-circuited, was moving in the opposite direction.

Like a swimmer, he plunged into the white flood. His eyes smarted, and he coughed as he ran. Involuntarily he stopped and bent to the

floor to catch a breath beneath the smoke. Denser and lower it rolled over him. It was useless to proceed. In the far distance he heard the dull roar of an electric locomotive. It was approaching him out of the smoke. He pressed back against the wall. A searchlight came suddenly out of the haze, a yellow blur of light. As the locomotive passed he swung on the low step behind. The driver, unconscious, sprawled over the top, his fingers still clenched about the handle of the controller.

As they reached the door in the side of the entry through which he had just come, Harry threw off the current and dragged the limp body from the seat. Struggling with his awkward burden, he opened the door — the clean air in the entry beyond gave him a momentary sense of relief. By now the man who had fled past him had warned the men at bottom. Water and a fire-fighting crew were doubtless already on the way. He must act quickly. If they could get behind the fire, away from the smoke, they could attack it. Approach from the front was impossible, for in addition to the smoke the current of air carried the deadly invisible gas generated by the flames. The man at his feet gave evidence

of its effect. But his heart was still beating, and Harry knew that the fresh air would revive him. The man's eyes opened; slowly he climbed to his feet.

"Can you make it?" Harry asked.

The man nodded.

All the well-known short cuts recalled themselves vividly. Back through black rooms and abandoned workings Harry ran, now and then stumbling over tracks or piles of coal or stone. In an entry parallel to the one where he had left the locomotive driver he again investigated the smoke-filled entry that crossed it. Beyond the brattice door the smoke was of impenetrable density, and blended with the pitchy odor of wood was the oily smell of burning coal. A current of hot air fanned his face. The fire must be near the junction of the next entry.

Again he ran. Far up in the room ends men were working. He knew all the places. "Fire!" he yelled at them, "Go to bottom!" In the silence and peace of their working places they had been ignorant of the conflagration that was now raging but a quarter of a mile away behind the massive barriers of coal.

Much time was lost, but he had warned all of



the men in the section. By now the other section heads would have been notified and had time to start their men out of the mine.

As Gray rushed out of a room mouth into the third entry a locomotive ground past him, the gong clanging loudly, the flat steel top black with men. Behind it came the water cars, big tanks of water on low-wheeled frames. He sprang on the rear coupling. Already the air was acrid with smoke. The locomotive stopped, and he ran forward. A hundred feet ahead was the brattice door, the third one that he had visited — here the fire was.

Through the chinks about the door frame the smoke curled white in the headlight of the locomotive. Then he saw a pink light tinge the soft curl of smoke. A twisting tentacle of crimson showed here and there around the door's edges. The tentacles united into a rim of flame. Then the whole door burst with a gaseous puff into a panel of fire. There was a moment of stillness in which he could hear the snapping and cracking of the dry wood. Then the door collapsed in a seething burst of sparks. A huge white curtain of smoke seemed to lift for a moment as the air current was diverted, and

disclosed the walls of the cross entry, a glowing incandescent mass of ruddy flames. The coal walls of the entry were burning. The tunnel had become a mighty tube of heat and smoke. Slowly the smoke lowered; then, like a fog bank, the dense soft cloud began slowly and smoothly to advance down toward them, filling the entry with its dense white substance.

"The gas! Run for your lives!" a voice shouted.

Every man for himself, they climbed on board the locomotive and the water cars, and the driver reversed the trolley. The wheels rumbled, and the heavy train started backing the useless tanks of water toward the bottom. The fire was beyond control.

At the bottom men moved hurriedly in the bright glare of the electric lights. The telephones were in constant communication. Men were counted as they boarded the hoists. Orders were given, and little groups disappeared on their execution. On an incoming locomotive were four limp bodies. The deadly white damp was flooding the workings.

The air grew still and warmer. At the top of the air shaft the great fan had been slowed down,

to reduce the air velocity which had fanned the flames and carried them on its current.

His face blackened and his eyes red with smoke, Colby, the mine manager, seemed to be everywhere. "Everybody get out!" he shouted. "We're going to cut off the fans and close the shaft."

Up and down, up and down, the man hoist traveled, and with each trip the group of men at the bottom became smaller. Two gangs were still in the workings, where they had gone to strategic points to try to block off the burning area. They appeared, defeated, their grimy faces gleaming with sweat, eloquent of their battle with this monster of heat and stupefying vapor.

The last hoist was ready. With Colby and half a dozen others Harry stepped on board. Already the smell of smoke was strong in the quiet air. The hoist shot upward. The air grew colder and colder. Then the movement slowed abruptly and a flood of dazzling sunshine flared in their strained eyes.

It was night before the shaft mouths were closed. Harry walked slowly up the long street. In the crystalline depth of the sky stars shone like flashing jewels. Some one was standing

motionless inside the Hagen gate. It was Alice. "I was scared for you," she said simply.

For a moment they stood silent.

"I am going. It's all over for weeks now, perhaps months."

"You're going? Now?"

"I guess I'll take the late train out of Dalney; drive over to catch it. Perhaps we may not see each other soon."

She faced him, her face white in the moonlight. With infinite tenderness he bent over her and kissed her cheek. It was cold with the night and moist with sudden tears.

Wildly she flung her arms about him. He disengaged her gently.

Like a man stunned, he stumbled up the path. Through the thin door of his room he could hear her softly crying. Then he heard her step and the sound of her door close behind her. Automatically he stripped the little room of his possessions and packed his hand bags. . . .

Almost a year had slipped by since that gray morning when Harry had first set foot in Chicago. In Carbon, in the velvet night of the mine, in the silent danger of his daily work, in the rude companionships, new forces had exerted power-



ful influences upon him. He had become physically strong and with bodily strength had come a mental clarity. Then had come his own self-analysis; he saw fairly his failures, he estimated his potentialities; he knew himself.

His train reached Chicago early in the morning, and as he drew on his shoes he smiled; for the first time in a year the gleam of polish glossed the leather. From the station he walked to a small hotel to which he had been directed by a fellow traveler. On the way to the hotel he ate breakfast in a lunchroom, and the plain, inexpensive food tasted good to him.

Now, sitting on the edge of the iron bed, he drew long fragrant breaths from his pipe with evident pleasure. For the moment he was physically content; he was at peace with his world.

Then he began to survey his future. His small savings would not carry him long in idleness. He put on his hat and overcoat. He would call on Carleton. It was only proper that he should inform him of his leaving Carbon, and, moreover, Carleton was the only person he knew in Chicago.

Outside, the sharp air invigorated him. There was no snow, and the dry pavements were filled

with moving traffic. With long strides, he followed the sidewalk for several blocks to Michigan Avenue. In a glass he caught his reflection. It momentarily shocked him; then he smiled. He was shabby, and he was unashamed. . . .

The girl in Carleton's office asked him to wait, and it was fifteen minutes before he was ushered down the long hall and into the big paneled room. Carleton greeted him with the same cordiality and direct simplicity that Harry remembered; but there were lines on the thin, dark face, and as he spoke he fingered nervously the pens and clips on the desk top.

"I've been talking long-distance with Colby. Now let me have some first-hand stuff about the fire."

With businesslike simplicity Harry narrated the details of the disaster and the condition of the mine when he had last seen it.

"Colby says it's a question of three or four months before we can open up again."

Harry met the implied question. "When I left yesterday, I wrote a note to Colby and told him I was leaving."

"Have you a position?" Carleton asked. "Do you know what you are going to do?"

"No, but I think I can line up something."

There was a brief pause.

"Wouldn't you like a card to a club?" Carleton asked.

"No, thanks; I'm afraid I wouldn't be able to use it right now."

"Well, call me up some noon and lunch with me." The older man held out his hand and his eyes demanded assent.

"I shall be glad to. You've done more for me than you realize."

On the street corner Harry bought a couple of newspapers and walked back to the hotel. In his room he turned to the Help Wanted advertisements. A bewildering variety of employment offered, but he checked only here and there with his pencil. Carefully he copied the five or six names and addresses that he had selected, and set out.

That night he lay for an hour sleepless, turning in his mind the experiences of the day. His feet were lame from tramping the hard sidewalks. He was tired and nervously on tension from the strain of his fruitless interviews.

The next day dawned raw and gray; dun clouds pressed low over the city; the streets

were sloppy with the slush of the night's snow-fall. He bought the morning paper and turned hurriedly past the world news to the close-packed page that might afford his opportunity. There were four new listings that offered promise, so he hurried through his breakfast in order that no other applicant might precede him. . . .

"When do you want to start?" Harry's questioner was a man of middle age with gray streaks in his smooth-brushed hair and shiny spots on the elbows and cuffs of his well-brushed blue serge suit.

Harry faced him squarely. "I'm ready now," he said.

"You can report at eight to-morrow."

Across the street from the high windows of the offices of the Northern Railroad a lofty office building blocked the sky. In the scant light of day electric lights cast long shadows across the cluttered desk tops and challenged the gray light that seemed to halt with the outer air at the misted glass of the windows.

Like a military formation, the desks filled the great room, and over these desks, hour after hour, flowed the records of a railroad's commerce: the freight of cities and the produce of



far-flung acres, the mighty movement of a nation's industry. The hours were long and the work monotonous. After Harry's life of physical activity this slavery in the close and vitiated air made him feel like a caged animal. He awaited with anticipation the brief noon hour when he could stand on the sidewalk and drink in the cold air. And the thoughts of the afternoon all terminated with the long, fast walk to his boarding house.

Not even during his first weeks at Carbon had he led a more solitary existence.

In the third house beyond the factory Harry had found a room that met with the requirements of his meager income. Beyond the elaborate front door, with its inset stained glass, two flights of stairs led through gloomy halls to the third floor. Dim gas lights accentuated the darkness and enabled him barely to recognize the other lodgers. Faint smells of cooking occasionally hung in the musty air of the hallway, and once from his landlady's quarters on the ground floor he heard the sound of a piano, hushed and distant.

One noon hour he went out to lunch with a man who worked at the desk immediately be-

hind his own. His name was Dave Hennessey, and Harry had been attracted to him by his quiet manner and particularly by the fine physique that showed itself beneath the cheap ready-made suit. Hennessey, he learned, belonged to an athletic club and boxed there three evenings a week. The idea appealed to Harry. It suggested exercise and companionship. Gladly he accepted Hennessey's invitation to go there with him that evening.

The Elite Athletic Club occupied a bare room in an old loft building. A few exercising machines lined the walls. There was a table with torn files of the "Police Gazette" and sporting journals for the literary, and under a frame of lights in the center of the room was the ring where the fast patter of rubber-shod feet and the flick of gloved fist against white flesh announced the training of new champions.

That evening Harry put on the gloves with Hennessey, and for a fast half hour he pitted his strength and natural quickness against the steady science of his opponent. Then for another half hour Hennessey coached him, repeating again and again a particular blow and the counter until Harry had mastered it. After an

icy shower he pulled on his clothes. He had never felt better.

The next day he wrote a note to Carleton and told him of his job with the Northern. He did not give the address of his boarding house, but he knew that Carleton would some day seek him out and draw him into his own world. Sooner even than he anticipated came the summons.

It was two days later that he was called to the telephone, and before Harry realized what he was doing he had agreed to dine at Carleton's house that Saturday evening. It was just a small dinner, the older man explained, and he said something about some other young Harvard men whom Harry would meet there.

As Harry hung up the receiver he realized with dismay that he had no clothes for such an occasion. At noon the next day he ate a sandwich and then hurried to a men's clothing store on State Street. From his slim reserve he had taken a sum sufficient for his purchases. That evening he dressed himself carefully as for a rehearsal. As he glanced at himself in the small glass over his bureau he realized that the result was satisfactory.

On Friday night he boxed again with Hennessey at the Elite. He was improving, and the science of the sport appealed to him. Hennessey was a good example of a first-class amateur, but already Harry was beginning to be able occasionally to take the offensive. He was strong and possessed a catlike agility; his reach, too, was superior to his opponent's, and his eye, trained by the blackness of the mine, was quick and accurate. A half dozen loungers looked on with languid interest, among them Abie Cohen, the club's trainer, a small apeline man who had at one time held local honors in the prize ring.

With the confidence of superior skill, Hennessey feinted and as Harry raised his left arm to guard he gave a quick jab at the stomach beneath Harry's raised arms. The blow was hard and straight. For a second Harry stopped, a desire to double forward almost overpowering him. Hennessey's face seemed thrust into his own. There was a grin on the thin lips.

Like a flash, Harry swung forward. His left fist struck clean. That was a blow Hennessey himself had taught him. He saw a trickle of red drop suddenly from the bruised nostril. Again his fist scored, hard on the out-thrust jaw; that



was another blow that he had studied. He was playing the game with his head as well as his hands.

Hennessey had crumpled on the floor and a couple of the onlookers were throwing water in the upturned face. Abie fluttered at Harry's elbow. "Say! Say! Say!" he was vociferating. "You got it in you, kid!"

With a dazed expression Hennessey opened his eyes and sat up on the floor. Then he smiled broadly. "I guess you'd better get a new teacher," he commented. "I'm through instructing you."

It was exactly half past seven on Saturday evening when Harry pressed the bell at Carleton's door. Through the wrought-iron grill and the plate glass he saw a square vestibule of smooth gray stone. Then the butler came down a pair of low steps from a door beyond, and Harry entered.

Carleton greeted him in the library. He was standing with his back to the fire, his tall, thin figure accentuated by his evening clothes. Harry surveyed the room. Bookcases and carved panels of dark wood lined the walls and against the panels were a few simply framed etchings. His

feet moved silently in the deep dark carpet. The warm stillness of the room almost oppressed him.

In the next ten minutes the others joined them, perhaps a dozen in all. The fragment of toast and caviar that the butler placed before him recalled other dinners he had attended. It seemed twenty years ago.

He spoke to Mrs. Carleton, a slender woman with pretty teeth, and a streak of premature gray in her black hair.

"I can't tell you what it means to me to have an evening like this," he said.

"My husband has had a great deal to say about you," she answered. "He liked the way you stood by your job at Carbon."

On his right at dinner a young woman with gleaming white arms and shoulders was telling him of a dance that was to be given a few weeks later. With frank interest he watched her.

"Jack, over there, says you've been a miner; why don't you come in your miner's costume? It's to be a fancy dress, you know."

Harry tried to explain that miners do not wear a costume, just overalls and old clothes, soiled and torn. He felt a curious resentment at the suggestion. Those clothes had been his uniform;

in them he had dared death; in them he had found salvation for his soul. He could not flaunt these things.

She acquiesced amiably. "But you'll come to another dance that is being given by some friends of mine. I'll ask for an invitation for you. Now, you must write your address, here, on this card."

Harry smiled as he wrote the street and number of the West Side boarding house on the bit of pasteboard.

"And, of course, you'll dine with us before," she said.

A white-wrapped bottle slanted past his shoulder and amber liquid sparkled and bubbled in the heavy champagne glass. He drank eagerly but slowly. That, too, recalled the past.

Across the table a thin-faced man with eyeglasses was speaking with emphasis: "There is no such thing as American architecture. Yes, possibly the so-called Colonial for the simpler types of cottages and small buildings. But you must turn to the established periods if —"

The auburn head again bent toward Harry. "That's Billy Graylear," she explained. "He has lived abroad, I don't know how many years. He

was at the Beaux Arts, and he designs all the big houses here."

A heavy, gray-haired man a few places from Graylear broke into the conversation: "That's all right for your country houses, William, but Chicago's a business town, remember that."

On Harry's left a plump woman of forty flung to him infrequent polite sentences. Beside her a man with tired eyes listened patiently. "I repeat," she explained, "the old adage is true, woman's place is in the home."

The girl on Harry's right again leaned toward him. "That's Mrs. Henderson," she explained. "She was a rabid anti and a wonderful speaker. The man she is talking to is one of the big men on the Board of Trade. He's made several fortunes in wheat in the past two years."

Harry took a cigarette from the tray at his elbow. The girl beside him had already lighted one.

"I think I'll have to take you under my wing." She blew a sudden light cloud and laid down her cigarette. "My husband is abroad," she continued, "and when one is as much alone as I am it's very nice to have some one to look after."



For a moment her mention of her husband annoyed Harry. He had not caught her name in their casual introduction.

"You must be very lonely," she said. "It is always hard to be in a strange city. You will let me help you, won't you?"

What a wonderful thing it must be, he thought, to be married to a woman so beautiful. The man must be a fool to let business take him away from her. He looked squarely at her. "Your husband is a very lucky man," he said bluntly.

"To be in Europe?" she laughed.

"That's an unkind way of turning a sincere remark," he answered.

Dinner over, they returned to the library, where Harry and the girl who had sat at his right continued their conversation. Life had suddenly become surcharged with peace and plenty. Tomorrow he would awaken to the drab dawn of the tiny West Side bedroom. But to-night he was again Harry Gray, the Harry Gray of his inheritance.

"You know, I really don't think I caught your name when we were introduced," he said abruptly.

"Wheatley, Beatrice Wheatley, Mrs. Charles Gales Wheatley."

"You have been very good to me," he said.

"Jack tells me you have just come to Chicago. You have had a pretty stiff year, I fancy. Just what are you doing now?"

She listened gravely as he told her of his work and its tedium, but when he narrated the incidents of his evenings at the athletic club he saw her lips part with interest.

"You box there three times a week?" she repeated. "It's bully! I can't help but adore a man who has physical strength."

Her small pointed foot beat emphasis to her words and he admired the slim ankle and the rounded instep above the edge of the black satin slipper.

The coffee cups were taken away and the card tables appeared.

"Some bridge?" she asked.

"I would rather not, unless I am needed," Harry answered. "I haven't played in a long while, and somehow, to-night, I want to have nothing to distract me from all this. You don't understand, of course, but I'm sort of taking a vacation to-night. To-morrow I go back again."

Their talk wandered. Mutual acquaintances were discovered. Then he spoke of Carbon, and in brief sentences told her of his life in the mine. But in all his narrative he failed to mention Ellen or Alice. Several times he was conscious of his avoidance.

Through a white veil of cigarette smoke Beatrice Wheatley watched him, and when he finally got up to leave she stood for a moment beside him and looked up at him. With a sense of surprise he realized how small she was — the crown of her golden head hardly reached to his shoulder — and resisted an abrupt impulse to embrace her, as he would a child.

He was glad that she accepted without question his refusal to be driven to his lodgings. For a moment her warm hand rested in his. In the darkness of her limousine he saw her face white in the light of a corner arc light. Then he closed the door and the machine moved off from the curb.

Above, a thick sky pressed down upon the city. A raw, cold wind swept in from the lake. Slowly he walked to the nearest car line. His recreation was over. He must return to the chill room of his boarding house, the overheated office,

and the club where he boxed with Hennessey. But far away, a bright light beyond the immediate gloom, was the evening when he would again mingle with his own people. And on that night he would again see Beatrice Wheatley.



## VII

IT was almost noon before Harry got out of his bed the following morning. It was raining, and a steady stream of water splashed on the cornice outside his window from a broken spout. The room was damp and cold. From the register a thin current of air emanated, faintly warm and scented with coal gas. He opened the door to draw some heat from the hall, and climbed back into bed.

In a daydream he reviewed the past evening. How different it all was! He recalled vividly the great stone house, the faultlessly served dinner, the wines, the conversation, and the woman who had sat beside him. She had put herself out to be gracious to him. He had been flattered by her interest.

As he looked at the gray, cracked plaster above him, he wondered how soon he might accept Beatrice Wheatley's invitation to call. There had been an ingenuous informality in her manner. He found himself recalling the beauty of her slight body, the poise of the small aristo-

cratic head with its hair of flaming gold, and the curious little catch of hesitation in her voice. Abruptly he forced his thoughts into other channels. It frightened him a little that he had been so susceptible. Possibly the champagne had heightened his appreciation.

The days following the dinner at the Carletons went by with a rapidity that surprised him. He did not care particularly for his work, but it filled the hours. It was at least a start.

A week or so later Carleton again called him on the telephone. Could Harry lunch with him that noon at the University Club?

Across the table Carleton faced him, good-looking, alert, and affable. It was a pleasant contrast to the customary lunch-counter repast. Carleton was interested in something; his questions were thrown out with more than passing curiosity.

"You are happy at your work?" he asked. "You feel that this is the thing you want to do?"

Harry's answer was prompt. That was a question he too had been pondering. "No, I don't think it is," he answered. "At Carbon I got my feet under me. Now I have to do the same sort of thing again. I must prove to myself and

others that I can succeed. I think I can do that with this work in time, and I can live meanwhile, but there may be other work that would give me a better chance to get ahead faster."

"I've been watching you with a lot of interest, Gray." Carleton's voice was friendly. "You are a very different fellow to-day from the Gray I first saw a year or so ago. I liked the way you took hold of things at Carbon, and I liked the way you went out here and got a place for yourself."

"I have you to thank for a lot of it," Harry answered.

"Well, I'm going to make another suggestion. Ever since you arrived in Chicago I've had my eye out for something for you to do, something that might bring you in a little better income and give you a chance to get ahead more quickly. I believe you told me you had a certain ambition?"

Harry blushed consciously. "Yes. I can't do much about it, though, until I have something behind me. There was a time when money was the last thing that concerned me. Now it seems to be about the first."

"Some friends of mine in the East," Carleton

continued, "opened a branch out here about a year ago. They have done mighty well with it, so well, in fact, that they are looking for a bright young man or two to jump into their selling end. Jim Fish, who is out here temporarily and is a member of the firm, dined with me the other night. I talked to him a little about you. They sell fabrics. Have some big mills in Massachusetts. I think there's a place for you with them if you want it. And if you make good you might end up in Boston yet."

Harry's eyes betrayed his excitement. "Do you really mean there's a job actually open?" he demanded.

"That's what I'm trying to convey to you. Better go round to-morrow noon and talk with Fish yourself."

That evening Harry wrote a long letter to Uncle Bill Holman. For many months his pride had held him from apologizing to the older man for his conduct that bitter morning when he had spurned his interest and scorned his counsel. Simply and tersely he recounted the results of his activities since he had left Boston. He regretted the opinion that Holman must have held of him. He believed that now he was seeing life



fairly and squarely. He was grateful to Holman for the time and labor he was giving to his father's affairs. From Holman's brief letters the inheritance seemed to be liabilities rather than assets.

When he had finished the letter he wrote to Ellen. He tried to convey simply and moderately his realization of how he must have appeared to her. His self-analysis was honest and without reservation. He tried to explain his new viewpoint. He closed the letter with a request that he might see her again.

As he sealed the envelope, doubt again troubled him. Did he know Ellen Davenport any more than she knew him? For years he had idolized her. He wondered how he would find her now. Would the old appeal still be there?

A few days later he tendered his resignation to the Northern Railroad. A couple of years ago he would probably have considered addressing a written communication to an officer of the company. Now he walked over to the desk of the man who had hired him. "Chief, I'm going to quit."

The gray head did not lift from the pile of papers on the desk. "When?"

"Saturday. If that's all right."

"Suppose you've got something that looks better?"

"I hope so. I'm much obliged to you for giving me a chance here, anyway."

The gray head looked up. "Good luck. Sorry you're going." . . .

Harry's talk with Jim Fish was highly satisfactory. He liked the man, and the work promised from the start considerably more than he had expected.

"I won't hold out any promise," Fish told him, "but if you deliver there's a real opportunity for you."

Hennessey learned of the change with evident regret. "I suppose you'll quit boxing now," he commented. "Some of the fellows have been talking about asking you to represent the club in a bout with a guy in Waukegan. You could do it; we all think you've got the stuff in you."

Later, when he thought over what Hennessey had said, the implied confidence thrilled him. That, after all, was making the team. The cold, bare room of the Elite Athletic Club, with its fringe of ringside faces, was very different from the Stadium with spectators piled by thousands

skyward from the grass plot. And yet it was the same thing. It gave him a feeling of exaltation.

The new work was interesting and varied, and the hours were shorter. He liked the people with whom he was thrown. He enjoyed the light and quiet of the pleasant offices.

A week later he abandoned his boarding place and moved to a similar room, but more agreeably located on the north side of the city. The location was even more accessible to the office, and, moreover, most of the people he was meeting lived in that part of town.

The first night he walked around to the Wheatleys'. It was a small, three-story residence, with a smart façade of brick and limestone. He glanced about him with frank interest. Beatrice Wheatley interested him, appealed to him. He wondered what her husband was like. She had no children; she had told him that, and she had told him also that she was much alone. He did not regret her husband's absence; he had a feeling that he would not like him.

She came into the room as he thought of these things. Her hand rested in his for a brief moment.

"This is nice of you," she was saying. "I thought perhaps you had forgotten me, and that all your pleasant promises that you would come and see me were never to materialize." The elusive, lisping catch in her voice fascinated him. "You are coming here for dinner two weeks from Saturday? It isn't going to be a fancy-dress thing, after all, so I won't insist on your wearing your miner's clothes."

"I hope no hesitation sounded in my acceptance the other night," he answered. "I have been looking forward to it ever since. You probably don't realize what it means to go to dinner parties and dances and all that sort of thing again after you have been in exile."

"Now that you are living so near," she commanded, "you must come here often."

She watched him through her long lashes. He could not guess her thoughts, but her positive personality at the same time disquieted him and interested him. He wondered how old she was; how long she had been married.

For an hour they talked. With complete indifference he realized that he was confiding in her, piece by piece, the narrative of his life and all the bitterness of his failures. All, in fact,



except one — Ellen's name had not been mentioned. That was something of which he did not care to speak. He spoke of Alice, wholesomely, and of what her sympathy and gentleness had meant to him.

Beatrice Wheatley smiled with understanding. "You probably were fortunate to end your experience there when you did," she said. "We shall have to find some charming girl here for you."

He tried to answer her with a pretty compliment — said that he would be satisfied if he might call on her occasionally, but he became involved and confused. His words seemed commonplace and forced. He felt the color flush his face.

Gracefully she led him out of troubled waters. "I think we shall be splendid friends. I look forward to having you meet my husband."

It was a very natural remark, but he flashed a glance at her. She had said it to free him of his embarrassment, to relieve the situation. In a distant part of the house low chimes sounded cheerily, then slowly a deep, hollow note struck ten. He got up to leave. "It's been bully this evening." He spoke with spontaneous enthusiasm.

"You will come again soon?" she pleaded. "I am so much alone now, and it's delightful to have such a pleasant evening." . . .

The night was clear, and the damp breeze from the lake was cool and bracing. Harry's heels rang with metallic resonance on the sidewalk. It had been a delightful evening, he told himself. She was a charming woman, more like a splendid girl than a woman. And yet even he, in his ingenuousness, sensed an indefinable something beyond the frank abandon of youth. It was an aspect that he did not understand; it puzzled him, and for some incomprehensible reason disturbed him. Still, that too was a part of her charm. It was a characteristic he had observed in no other woman. It enticed him.

A gas light burned low in the hall. On the white marble top of the old-fashioned hatrack a few letters were strewn. In the dim light he saw his name on one of the envelopes in large, unformed writing. He picked it up and tried to think who the writer might be. Then he looked at the postmark. It was stamped Carbon, and he knew it must be from Alice Hagen. He stuffed the letter into his pocket and went up to his room. The hall was hot and close, the

unaired smell of an old house thickly tenanted. His door closed, he opened the window. The fresh night seemed like a stimulant.

He sat down on the bed and tore open the envelope. It contained a single sheet of ruled paper, but both sides were closely covered with writing. Twice he read it from beginning to end. The expression was as awkward as the writing, but the purport was clear, and it was characterized by a childish simplicity.

The mine would probably remain sealed for a number of months, she wrote. Most of the men had already left for other fields. Of course neither her father nor Sam Dawson was needed, and her father had determined to move to East St. Louis, and keep some sort of store. She hated the prospect. The evening before Dawson had shown her a letter. His chance in South America had come. He was going at once. He had asked her to marry him and go with him. Here two words were obliterated. Evidently she had hesitated how to express the next paragraph. Then she continued. She had accepted his proposal. They were to be married at once. She thought she loved Sam, and she was certain of his love. She signed herself "affectionately," and misspelled the word. That was all.

Harry crushed the letter in his hand and leaned his elbows on the window sill. So that was over. It had never been possible; it never could have been. He realized that. But for the moment the bottom seemed to drop out of things. In a boyish way he had cared for her, and he knew that there had been a time when she would have married him. Dawson was a fine, clean chap; he would make a good husband, and they would be happy. It was all for the best.

Once again he read the letter. He saw the cheap ruled paper, the angular, awkward writing, the misspelled words. In the bureau drawer was a brief, informal note from Beatrice Wheatley inviting him to dine at her house. He took it out and reread the friendly, perfectly expressed sentences. The crisp white paper was embossed with a small white monogram; the writing was sure and certain.

A few days later he met Carleton on the street. It was late in the afternoon, and both were walking home after a strenuous day. Carleton was pleasantly communicative. It seemed to Harry a favorable occasion to satisfy his curiosity about Beatrice Wheatley. He had been



again with her the evening before, another delightfully intimate evening before the fire.

"What sort of a chap is Wheatley?" he asked. Carleton had just mentioned Beatrice, and the question fell naturally.

"Well, frankly, I think he's a poor lot. Both of them had a pot of money — too much — and they staged a sort of elopement, and he's done nothing since. He came from the South somewhere and was fussing around with some kind of business here. Then he met Beatrice."

"What is he doing in Europe?"

Carleton answered the question with a laugh: "Why, that's a little hard to explain. He's been rather a problem to Beatrice, and she to him, for that matter. Charley has been getting to be a pretty systematic patron of the vintner, even more so since they were married. He got going it pretty strong, and I guess they had some sort of a blowup. Oh, nothing decisive. But he left in a huff, and most of us, Beatrice's friends, would just as soon he stays where he is."

"She mentioned him to me and spoke very nicely of him."

"She would. But in her way she's as volatile as Charley. He should have married another

type of woman, and she'd be a lot happier with another kind of man." . . .

Time passed on rapid wings. Each day, it seemed, Harry met new and pleasant people. With increasing frequency he was invited to dine. He was struck with the cordial hospitality of the great city; it contrasted sharply with his first impression of cold commercialism. It was a vital, stirring atmosphere in which he found himself. By day, in the crowded cañons of the Loop, the air seemed surcharged with untiring energy. Business was the great and absorbing activity; the stimulant entered his blood; it exhilarated him.

Once or twice a week he went back to the dingy room of the West Side Athletic Club, at the end of the afternoon, and boxed for an hour. In the press of his business and social life he felt the need for occasional hard exercise, but it seemed to become more and more difficult for him to find time. He was sweeping along in the flood of a resistless current.

Ten days had passed since he wrote to Ellen. For four or five days he looked for her answer to his letter, but no envelope addressed in her even hand awaited him on his return in the eve-

ning. In the optimism which his new work inspired he saw for the first time a day in the not too distant future when it might be possible to consummate his long-cherished dreams. Even now he felt justified in asking her to marry him. In this city of youthful achievement it could not be long before he would be in a position to provide the simple necessities of married life. The thought thrilled him. He found himself wondering how it would be to return in the evening to the small apartment and find her waiting for him. Gradually life would broaden. The future teemed with countless happy episodes. His day-dreams engrossed him.

Her letter came on Friday evening. He read it under the hall light; then he went up to his room and sat in the darkness trying to think. The letter was long and closely written. She felt that he deserved a full explanation, she wrote; their old relationship required her to be candid; it was hard to do, but it was only fair to him.

He got up, lit the light, and reread it. His estimate of himself and the opinion he had created in her mind had been correct. She had cared for him once, and it was a sentiment that

she hoped ever to remember — a warm portrait in her gallery of the past. Then she had felt a change in him. His point of view had offended her. She realized, she admitted, that he had done the right thing in casting off every influence of his old environment and establishing his true valuation amid new associations. There had been a time when she cared for him; then there had been a time when she wanted to care for him, but could not. Now she knew that it could never be. They would always be friends — that was all.

But it was not all. The last page carried the blow that had sent him groping up the dim staircase to sit silent in the darkness of his room. Arthur Clark had proposed to her. He was taking a three-year course and would graduate in June. She intended to accept him.

For hours after he went to bed Harry shifted back and forth on the hot and crumpled pillow. Then the vigorous health of his young body asserted itself and he slept. When he awoke it was seven o'clock.

With a grunt of relief he nestled his head back into the pillow. It was Saturday, a half day of interesting work at the office, and then a holiday



until Monday. He recollected that it was to-night that he was going to Beatrice Wheatley's dinner party before somebody or other's dance at the Blackstone.

Then his eyes opened wide and he lay staring at the ceiling, thinking of Ellen's letter. His work, his future — what did they mean now? The motive for striving was gone. The goal was denied.

It was not unnatural that he thought of Beatrice Wheatley. She would understand; she would give him the tenderness and sympathy that he required. She too, he felt, carried her own cross. Then his better instinct came to the fore. This was his own secret. He had lost; it was up to him to prove himself a good loser, at least a silent one.

Harry had become a frequent visitor at the Wheatleys' house. Even more than John Carleton's house, it had become a home to him. In the atmosphere with which Beatrice Wheatley surrounded herself he found something at once sympathetic and agreeable. All afternoon he tramped doggedly through Lincoln Park along the lake front up to the end of the Esplanade on Sheridan Road, and then back to the out-

swing of Streeterville. He was healthily tired, quieted by his exertion and invigorated by the wind from the lake.

At the Wheatleys' a small fire was burning on the hearth when he was ushered in. He watched it, his thoughts tangled in a maze. Then he became conscious of a voice, very clear and low, calling to him from the top of the stairs. It was Beatrice Wheatley.

"Awfully nice of you to get here before the rest," he heard her saying. "We can go into the library and have a nice chat all by ourselves."

The library was in the front of the house, an oak-paneled room with a high white-molded ceiling. Tall bookcases flanked the fireplace and filled the opposite end, and behind the wide-meshed screens of dull gold in their narrow doors the tooled backs of deep red and blue and green morocco volumes made a plaid of color against the brown woodwork. In narrow frames of gold, a pair of soft-colored aquatints hung between high French windows over which were drawn curtains of pale yellow. The mantel on the right was of gray stone, and a pile of oak logs smoldered on the hearth.

They sat down before the fire. Behind them

the only light in the room burned low from a deep-shaded table lamp.

All day Harry had anticipated this moment. Now that it was realized he was confused and silent.

The evening was beginning badly. This was not the kind of evening he had intended it to be. Still in the back of his brain was the longing to confide in her. Vainly he hoped that he might induce some confidence on her part which would enable him to reciprocate with a confiding of his own disappointments. And again there came to him the sharp warning to let his grief remain unvoiced.

He studied her features: the straight red mouth, the delicate nose with the narrow nostrils, the wide-set eyes, and the cloud of flame above the white brow.

Voices sounded in the hall below, and a minute later the room seemed filled with people. In the soft light Harry recognized a few familiar faces.

He found himself shaking hands with immaculately dressed, smooth-shaven men who professed a hearty pleasure in meeting him, and he spoke with studied politeness to half a dozen

young women appropriately gowned to match their partners.

They went down to dinner. On his right he found, with ill-concealed annoyance, a young woman who persisted in a search for mutual Bostonian acquaintances. He answered politely in the negative. Through the piled mass of flowers in the center of the white cloth he caught fleeting glances of Beatrice Wheatley. The shades of the candles threw her face into shadow, but he sensed a quick reaction as their eyes met. With a sudden sense of his obligations, he conversed with the women on either side of him.

The butler filled the wide-brimmed champagne glass.

The girl beside Harry shouted across the table: "I got it at that new shop on Michigan Avenue. They have the sweetest things you ever saw, and very reasonable, considering."

On his left a bronze-haired woman in her early thirties hazarded a question: "Do you go regularly to the concerts? Kreisler plays so beautifully. He will be at the Auditorium next Friday and Saturday."

Harry was hardly conscious of his answer. They were pleasant and intelligent people, and



he appreciated their frank cordiality, but to-night he could not find interest in the inconsequential topics of the dinner table.

In the deep, soft seat of the limousine he found himself sitting beside Beatrice Wheatley. "You were very quiet at dinner," she said. For the moment Harry did not answer. "I thought we had such a nice party. There were several people there, in particular, whom you must see a lot of."

She looked very small, lost in the loose folds of her cloak. Her glowing hair touched his shoulder as the car shot past another automobile.

"I had a very pleasant time," he finally answered. "If I was quiet, you mustn't think it was because I wasn't enjoying myself. I just felt that way to-night. You know how it is sometimes."

"Has anything gone wrong?" she asked. "I'm so sorry." She spoke in a voice so low that Harry barely caught the words. Then he realized that he had not answered her question; his silence had been an affirmation. On his hand he suddenly felt her small gloved fingers, a slight pressure, that was all, but he did not need to see her eyes to know her sincerity.

The automobile crossed the river, gliding swiftly over the smooth block pavement. A fine rain was falling, and through the moist glass the lights shone large and blurred. At the library a wall of skyscrapers lifted their dark front along the west side of the avenue, and on the east extended the barren desert of Grant Park and the long cañon cut of a railroad. Harry recalled that first morning in Chicago when he had looked out across the lake front. He had felt very helpless that morning, and yet, as he looked back, he wondered why life had seemed so hopeless. More rapidly than he had ever dared to hope the material things which he required were already coming within his grasp. What good were they to him now?

In Ellen's companionship he had recognized a blending of all the elements that he desired. And now the only woman toward whom he might turn was Beatrice Wheatley, the wife of another man.

They alighted in the glare of lights under a sheltering canopy. In the ballroom Harry saw the woman who had sat on his left at dinner, and in a moment he was beside her. She danced beautifully. Then some one cut in and he found

himself with another partner. Occasionally he saw Beatrice Wheatley. She danced continuously, her gold hair marking her presence. Once they swirled near to each other. She was dancing with an elderly man who moved in studied steps along the floor.

"Aren't you ever going to dance with me?" she called out as they passed. He smiled and nodded assent.

A few minutes later he found her, the center of a little group of men, all claiming her. She sighted Harry at a distance.

"The last shall be first," she announced. "Anyway, I promised Mr. Gray a dance a long while ago."

Harry had danced almost continuously that evening and with enjoyment. But not until now had he felt that complete sensuous abandon that only two dancers in perfect synchronism can experience. He held Beatrice Wheatley's slim body close to him, her hair brushing his face. Beyond that he did not feel her presence, so perfect was the harmony of their steps.

The music quickened in a mad finale, and they seemed to sweep around the room. High, white walls, glittering with gold and the white luster

of the lights, reeled past them. Then, suddenly, the music ended, and he looked down to see her face upturned to him, her eyes sparkling, her cheeks flushed.

"Harry, you dance wonderfully." Her voice was almost breathless. Reluctantly he released her. Already men were at her side pleading for the next dance.

"Harry," she cried to him, "you must dance with me again."

He smiled assent.

"And, Harry, you must take me home when I go, and Albert can drop you at your door. You'll never in the world get a taxi at this time of night."

It was nearly dawn when Harry and Beatrice Wheatley entered her limousine. The night was dark but clear, the air biting with the black coldness of early morning. The city lay dark, silent, and deserted, except in front of the hotel, where sound and movement and lights of automobiles carrying home the departing guests, brightened the picture.

Beyond that single indication of life the city stretched interminable under the blank sky, street lights illuminating empty sidewalks, tall



fronts of buildings lifting cheerless windows into the night.

For a few minutes neither spoke, then he heard her voice low and clear beside him. "Please don't misunderstand me, Harry" — he was conscious that she was resuming their brief conversation of the early evening — "but if you are in trouble, and I can help, you won't hesitate to let me, will you?"

"Of course; but there isn't anything any one can do, I guess. I do want to tell you some time —"

She interrupted him, and he became aware that she was preoccupied with her own thoughts; that she was trying to tell him something.

"You've probably wondered why I am always alone at home, ever since you have known me." Her voice was low, clear, and impersonal. "Perhaps people have intimated, unkindly or otherwise. You see, Charley and I never have really pulled together. We ran off and got married like the couple of crazy young things that we were, and then we didn't get along, and it became worse and worse. I don't suppose there ever could have been any real love between us, or it wouldn't have died so easily; it couldn't

have. But at all events I didn't see why I shouldn't get elsewhere the companionship he refused me, and then — well, perhaps you know he drank — drank abominably.”

With tense interest Harry waited for her to continue. Already he knew what she would tell him. The realization staggered him. She spoke again, her voice pitched slightly higher. “That was why Charley went away. We have agreed that it is the best thing to do. It will be a surprise to some people and no surprise to others. In two months we shall be free of each other, irrevocably. There can be no scandal; it is just a mutual agreement. It will be much the best thing for both of us.”

The car stopped in front of her house, and he walked with her to the door. “No, don't ring!” she commanded. “Jennie always sits up for me, and I don't want to wake the whole household. You see, I carry a latchkey, like a regular man.”

For a moment she stood framed in the open doorway. He took her hand and held it between his own. “Of course there's nothing I can do,” he blurted, “but you know how sorry I am.”

“You’re a very dear boy, Harry.” She laughed in a low, clear tone. “Don’t let’s talk any more about it. And now it’s very late, and I shall catch cold standing here. Good-night, and thank you for taking care of me.”

## VIII

FOR two weeks Harry waited before he could answer Ellen's letter. Now and then would come an impulse to write to her and wish her the happiness which she sought. Then would come a revulsion of feeling. There was still a chance. Might he not dare to go to her and once and forever win or lose with one final appeal? Two things restrained him. Deep in his heart he felt that he was defeated, and his pride curbed his desire. And even more strongly Beatrice Wheatley held him in an invisible leash from which he struggled at times to escape; to which he more frequently submitted gladly.

When he had met her that evening at Carleton's he had been attracted by her magnetic personality, her intuition, and her striking physical charms. He had felt safe in the fact that she was married and had allowed himself to play with the fascinating fire of her companionship. Then had come the startling news of her pending divorce. She would be free. The



knowledge staggered him. Should he withdraw or continue?

“Is there a chance?” he asked himself — “and if there is, would such a marriage prove happy?”

In his uncertainty he avoided her, afraid of that physical something that she possessed that dulled his reason and led him blindly along the path of desire.

Spring was in the air. Already the trees in the parks were breaking into green. The ice was gone from the lake and the sky was a deeper blue.

Harry was working hard at the office. It was work that he enjoyed, and he went at it with the spirit of a sportsman. Perhaps there was more in the attitude than he realized. Business was now an occupation through which he found mental relief; it was no longer the means to a desired end. Occasionally he lunched with Fish and enjoyed the amiable comradeship of his superior. Thus the days drifted by.

When he finally wrote to Ellen it was a brief note. He wrote honestly. He told her that he believed he was a different man from the Harry Gray she had known. With equal frankness he spoke of his dislike for Arthur Clark. There

were no implications in his letter that he wished a final chance, but a woman might read between the lines.

Then he called on Beatrice Wheatley. To his surprise, she did not comment on the two weeks that had passed since he had last seen her. Together they drank tea before the fire, while from the open French windows the air cooled the heated room with the moist touch of the springtime.

Neither was at ease, and he left finally with the feeling that each had been acting a part that was more or less distasteful.

A week later he received a note from her asking him to tea on the following Friday. A half dozen people were in the gray drawing-room, and for an hour, bored but courteous, Harry chatted with the women and the two men about the tea table. Purposely he lingered, and when the last guest had gone he sank back in the divan with relief. Beatrice Wheatley smiled at him across the table. Outside, the light was fading. Noiselessly the maid entered and drew the curtains; the abrupt darkening of the room accentuated the ruddy glow of the firelight.

"Come over here," he commanded; "I want to talk with you."

She looked at him for a moment, amazed at the tone of his voice. Then she got up from the low hassock on which she had been sitting and sank down in the opposite end of the divan, regarding him with a puzzled inquisitiveness in her wide-set eyes.

"I want to talk with you, Beatrice," he said simply. "I know you will not misunderstand me."

Then he told her of Ellen, of the long struggle of the past year, of the letter. She listened, her eyes fixed on his, a faint flush tinging her cheeks. "Do you still love her?" she asked.

He reached out his arm and grasped her slender hand where it lay outstretched on the divan.

"Beatrice, I have gone over it, over and again. I love her. God knows, I've wavered at times, but deep down inside of me she has been the one thing that I cannot forget. Perhaps it is all a mistake; probably it is. She will marry him, and I will go on as well as I can. But I'm not going to give in now — no, not so long as there is a chance."

He paused for a moment, uncertain whether to go on. She felt his fingers tighten over hers. Then he went on, his words tumbling upon each other in hurried sentences: "I'm going to say what I shouldn't, Beatrice, but please don't misunderstand me. Ever since I first met you I have cared for you. For a long time I didn't realize how much I cared. You see, I didn't know. It never occurred to me that you were not happily married. Then you told me, and it sort of bowled me over. There's so much in being with a person constantly; I suddenly realized how much I have grown to care for you."

A log in the fireplace collapsed in a quick spurt of flame. He saw her eyes misted; her fingers seemed to draw him to her. For a second he wavered. Then he continued, in a low, tense voice:

"You see, I have tried to weigh it all; to realize that mine is a lost cause. And yet, in spite of it all, I can't give up, yet. It must sound awfully foolish, all this, but I've got to tell you how much I care for you, even if there is some one else who comes first. You see what I mean. I can't go on, and yet I must tell you."



He rose abruptly and stood with his back to the fire. "I don't know just what I am going to do, but I am going to play my final card. I know, as I know there's a to-morrow, that I truly love her, and until all chance is gone I'm going to fight ahead. Do you understand?"

Suddenly she stood beside him. Again he felt the magic of her presence. He seized her almost roughly and looked down into her upturned face. "Don't think that this has been easy. I never knew that a man could care two ways. But you've been so square and fine to me, I've got to tell you now that there's some one else that means so much to me that I can't forget it all."

There were tears on her cheeks; he felt her tremble; then she raised her hand and drew his face down toward her; he felt her lips against his cheek. "You are a dear, Harry; God bless you. I want you to be happy — so much happier than I have ever been." . . .

In the weeks that followed he worked furiously, with a determination that seemed invincible. The climax to his plans came more quickly than he expected. He had been lunching with Fish, and they were sitting opposite

each other at the little table, lingering over their coffee and cigars.

“I asked you to lunch with me to-day, Harry, with a purpose.” Fish tapped his cigar ash in the empty cup. “We have been talking a good deal about you, and I don’t mind telling you that we are pleased with the way you have taken hold.” He regarded Harry for a minute, a pleasant smile in the corners of his eyes.

“I like the work, and I like the people I’m working for; if I’m satisfactory, I guess that’s the answer.”

Fish laughed. “Fine,” he continued. “Now, listen to me. This is just a selling office out here — all it ever can be. All our mills are in New England. It isn’t a question of selling; it’s a question of increasing production. What we propose to do is to send you back east and give you a schooling in the other end of the game. Frankly, we need executives, and you, right now, constitute our sole growing executive material. You are young, I realize that, but youth should be no handicap. You’ve got the stuff; you’re no quitter.”

“I’m no quitter!” Harry repeated. Then an odd smile twitched his lips.

"You are willing to go back east and work along the lines I have suggested?"

"Yes, I am!"

"Good." Fish thrust out his hand across the table. "This isn't any bit of philanthropy or altruism on our part, Harry; we believe in you. And, incidentally, your salary will be adequate; we have discussed that."

That evening he walked out to the lake front where Lincoln Park swings a broad esplanade along the curved shore. The sky was luminous with stars, and the little waves lapped audibly against the stones of the sea wall. Far out on the horizon the lights of a steamer winked and shimmered above the rim of dark water. The spaciousness of the sky and the lake quieted him. Here he could think.

Next week he would leave for Boston. He would return as he had hoped he might some day return. He had made good. Perhaps this separation from the city on the lake front would be final. He realized that he would, in all probability never come back to live in Chicago.

Next week he would arrive in Boston. He had grasped the opportunity chiefly because it would give him a final opportunity to ask Ellen

to marry him. The chance was small; he realized that. She was practically engaged to another man. She had repeatedly told him that she did not love him.

Then he thought of Beatrice Wheatley. Did he love Beatrice, after all? Was it he who might be wrong? His instinct answered, promptly and unequivocally. It was Ellen whom he loved. The die was cast.

They said good-bye in the gray drawing-room, and when the few self-conscious and conventional things were said he took her hand and raised it to his lips. That was all. He did not dare to look at her, nor did he turn back to glance again at the house as he went down the sidewalk.

As the train passed through Gary, he stood on the platform of the observation car and looked back at the city. Over Chicago a vast gray smoke cloud stained the blue sky. Beyond the tall chimneys of the steel mills the lake gleamed a dazzling blue. His whole person suddenly seemed surcharged with gratitude. This vast, terrible city of restless, indomitable energy had welcomed him, encouraged him, and thrust him forward.



With a feeling of new confidence he walked back into the train. . . .

The morning was gray, and a fog, rich with the flavor of salt water, misted Boston, as Harry left the train. High in the sky the sun, a dull orange disk sharply outlined, seemed to mount precipitously through the dim vapor. He transferred his baggage to a shabby taxi and found himself rattling through the narrow, twisting streets.

Before he left Chicago he had asked for a week of leeway before he should undertake his new duties. He wanted these few days free from business interruption to determine his true status with Ellen Davenport. An hour, perhaps a few minutes, would tell the story. For some unaccountable reason, he felt certain of success. But should his cause be truly lost, what would he do then? He thrust the question from him. There could be no alternative.

He looked out of the open window of the taxi. Every street, every building, had a familiar, friendly look. He recalled a summer spent in England when he was a boy. How like London was this old New England city; an atmosphere of stability and decorous gentility

permeated it; it was an Old World place compared with Chicago.

At the hotel he secured an inexpensive room and at one o'clock ate a leisurely luncheon. While he ate he debated in his mind each detail in his plan. At first he was tempted to telephone Ellen and announce his arrival, but he concluded that it would be wiser to run the chance of finding her at home and present himself in person.

It was three o'clock when he rang her doorbell. The maid who opened the door was strange to him. Was Miss Davenport at home? he asked. He was informed that she would not return until after five. She was at the office.

In the street he felt a sudden depression of spirit. He had expected to find her at home; he had nerved himself for the meeting. It had not occurred to him that she would still be occupied with the work she had undertaken over a year ago. Aimlessly he crossed Marlborough and Beacon Streets to the river. The sun had burned away the fog, and the basin extended its broad, smooth surface to the Cambridge shore, a sheet of blue, palpitating

water. A few gulls wheeled gray against the sky. It was tranquil, and the sun warmed him pleasantly. For two hours he walked along the river bank immersed in his thoughts. At five o'clock he turned hurriedly back toward the Davenport house.

As he turned the corner he caught sight of a slender figure walking toward him. She was more than a block away, but he instantly recognized her. It was Ellen. A strange calmness came over him; he was conscious of an unnatural composure.

He walked to meet her. She was unconscious of his presence. Fear seized him that some unexpected disillusionment might await him; perhaps in the lonely hours he had exaggerated his memory of her charm and beauty. He saw her slim feet in low tan oxfords and her slender ankles, the smooth grace of the gray skirt and coat. He raised his eyes. Under the dark straw hat he saw her face. A triumphant feeling of reassurance came to him. She was more lovely than he had ever dreamed her to be.

Their eyes met. "Ellen!"

She looked at him, startled as at the sight of an apparition. Then she regained her com-

posure. "Harry — I never dreamed that you were in Boston. You are back for a visit, I suppose?" She spoke the commonplaces with evident effort.

He turned, and they walked slowly toward the house.

"May I come in, Ellen?" he asked. "I want to talk to you. There is so much that I must say to you."

She hesitated for an answer. "I don't know, Harry. It can do no good. I am afraid it would only be hard for both of us."

"You cannot deny me a chance. Ellen, I am ready to take your answer. I shall not speak of these things again. But it is only fair now to hear me out."

Within the hall he helped her off with her coat. An impulse swept him to seize the slender shoulders. She turned and led the way up the stairs. Beneath the brim of her hat he saw the flash of her dark eyes and the perfect oval of her face.

"Come," she said. "We will go up to the library and have tea." He followed blindly.

It was all the same, but instead of the boy and the girl whom he remembered in this familiar



environment there were now two new individuals. He was incomparably older, and in Ellen he saw a woman far lovelier than the girl of yesterday.

"I have come, Ellen — "

"Don't," she interrupted, "please. Why must you ask me again when I can only refuse?"

"Why must you refuse?" She was silent.

"Answer me. Don't you owe me some sort of answer? Ellen," he went on, "are you engaged to Arthur Clark? Are you going to marry him?"

"I thought I wrote to you," she answered. "I have even felt since that I wrote you almost too much."

"You wrote that you intended to marry Clark, but that you were not engaged."

"Please" — she tried to smile — "please, Harry, shan't we have tea?" She rose from her chair and moved toward the bell to ring for the maid.

With an impetuous movement Harry seized her by the arm and forced her to face him. The level light of the late afternoon sun illumined her face. He saw an almost frightened look in her dark eyes. Her full red lips were drawn



SLOWLY SHE LIFTED HER FACE TO HIS



back slightly from her white teeth. He held her unresistingly by the arm.

"I have loved you for too many years, I have suffered too much and passed through too many temptations" — he looked down at her face as he spoke, an intense passion in his blue eyes — "to be offered a cup of tea when I tell you that I love you. I will not be put off. I don't believe you love Clark or you would be engaged to him to-day. And because I know you don't love him, I am going to make you love me."

"I cannot marry you." She turned her head away from him and he saw that her eyes were wet.

"Is there a reason that I do not know?" he demanded — "some reason why you cannot love me?"

She faced him quickly, resentment in her face. "Yes; I cannot respect you, and I can never love a man whom I cannot respect."

"Cannot respect? Cannot respect me?" he repeated. "I don't understand."

She looked at him scornfully. "Please let go my arm." His hand relaxed and fell at his side.

"Why do you not respect me?"

"This is very unpleasant, and I think quite



unnecessary — this whole discussion — but if you will know, I shall tell you that I can never love a man who has lost my respect, and I cannot respect a man who plays a double game. I don't care so much what you might have done before you first asked me to marry you, but, after you did ask me, for you to go around as you did, and I believe have done, with the kind of women that — that —” She dropped down into the chair.

A wave of realization swept him. “Who told you these infernal lies?” She glanced sharply at him. “Did Clark tell you these lies?” Her eyes were looking far out through the window. He could not read her face. “Women; yes, I have seen much of several women, as fine women as ever lived; they gave me sympathy and affection and believed in me, while you listened to lies told behind my back.”

“I am going.” She saw him as he had never seemed before. His jaw was clenched; there were hard lines about his lips; his eyes were hot with anger. Behind him the light seemed to magnify him. “I am going,” he continued, “and I shall not return until I know the truth, until there has been a reckoning.”

He found his hat in the gloom of the lower hall and flung his overcoat over his arm. In the room she heard the door slam behind him; she heard the click of his heels as he walked quickly down the sidewalk.

As Harry turned the corner he became aware that a man was approaching from the opposite direction. It was Arthur Clark. Instinctively they faced each other.

"Well, well. How are you, Gray?" Clark held out his hand; then his eyes met Harry's and his arm fell slowly.

"This is very fortunate." Harry's voice was hard and without agitation. "You seem to be on your way to call on Miss Davenport, possibly to entertain her with some interesting information about me" — he raised his voice slightly — "some of your lies and insinuations about my behavior with women."

A flush colored Clark's face. "You are trying to call me a liar. I advise you to hold your tongue."

"Do you deny it?"

"Perhaps you forget the gay little parties you used to attend?"

"Since I first asked Ellen Davenport to marry

me I have never committed an act that she could not know."

"And perhaps you reconcile entertaining affairs with Chicago divorcees. Perhaps —"

The overcoat fell to the pavement, and before Clark could raise his arm the flat of Harry's palm swept his face with a stinging blow.

"Drag in my name — that's my affair alone; but, you dirty hound — you won't. Look out for yourself! I'm going to kill you."

The wide street was deserted. Even the houses seemed empty; all was peace and respectability. Through Harry's brain flashed strangely contrasting pictures. He recalled the night when Clark had called him the name that had burned into his soul; he saw again Red Devon's face hard against his own; he felt the stinging blows given and taken in the gymnasium when he had boxed with Hennessey; he saw Alice Hagen with her gentle sympathy, Beatrice Wheatley with her friendliness, and then he remembered Ellen's words: "I can never love a man whom I cannot respect."

There was a moment's silence as they stood facing each other. Then Harry spoke: "I want no misunderstanding. This is an old score,

and there is also a new one. You called me a quitter once. I have that to settle. But more than that you have lied about me behind my back in order to do me harm in Ellen Davenport's estimation. You will apologize to me."

"Do you want me to fight or listen to your lecture?" There was a sneer in Clark's voice. Instantly they put up their fists; then they closed on each other.

Once, only once, did Clark break through Harry's guard. It was a glancing blow with little force, but the sting of Clark's fist against his cheek maddened him. With a sudden succession of blows he beat Clark back. Before his onslaught he felt Clark weaken. There was an opening, and his fist struck hard in the center of the white face before him. Before Clark could recover he struck again and again. It was over. Clark had crumpled to the pavement, his face smeared with blood. There was a dazed look in his eyes. "I've had enough," he muttered.

Harry bent over him. "Do you apologize to me?" he asked.

"I apologize."

"Then get up and let's clear out of here."



He helped Clark to his feet and wiped his own face with his handkerchief. Purpling bruises on the white skin marked where Harry's blows had fallen. "I think that's about all," he continued; "but for the future the less I see of you the better."

Never once had the outcome been in question, not once had Harry felt the necessity of exerting himself to the utmost. It showed the physical change that the past year had made in him. For a minute he watched the retreating figure, but there was no light of exultation in his face, his eyes were strained and serious.

"Well" — he spoke half aloud — "I guess that's about the wind-up."

The next morning he called on Uncle Bill Holman. He was standing in front of his desk, and when the door closed behind Harry, he flung his arms about the younger man as a father would embrace his son.

"Uncle Bill —" Harry began as soon as their greeting was over.

"Never mind, Harry. I know what you're going to say. You left me that day like a wild Indian, but I understood. I've followed you ever since, more closely than you have realized.

I'm proud of you. If your father could only know the man you have made of yourself!"

For a few minutes they talked of Phelps Gray. Then Holman changed the subject. "If you had not come on here when you did," he said, "I would have sent for you in a few weeks, anyway. Your father left a pretty badly muddled estate. For a while it seemed as though his liabilities would more than wipe out the assets. I wrote to you at one time to that effect. Since then, however" — he paused to emphasize his words — "some of these ventures of your father's have worked out more or less successfully. As a matter of fact, I believe you may be reasonably sure that you'll have a living."

Harry sat quietly, unmoved by the significance of Holman's words. "Please don't misunderstand me, Uncle Bill. It's wonderful to hear this, of course, but, do you know, the best thing I have done has been to find myself. And now, somehow, all this idea of money seems a very different thing. I wanted to marry a girl," he continued. "I guess you know all about it" — Holman nodded his big gray head — "so I tried to make a man out of myself, and

to make a place for myself. But" — he smiled grimly — "the girl is going to marry some one else."

He felt Holman's hand on his shoulder. Then in an outburst of hurried words the barrier of his reserve was shattered and he told Holman the whole story, even the meeting with Ellen and his encounter with Clark on the day before.

"I guess it's all over now," he concluded.

Holman struck the table a blow with his fist. "Not much is it all over," he thundered. "You've battled everywhere and everybody for this girl except the girl herself. Make her marry you; kidnap her if necessary. I tell you if she has half the sense you think she has you can make her marry you. Now go, and don't let me see you again until you've settled that question."

That afternoon he went out to Cambridge. Ellen, he knew, would be all day at the office, and he could not see her until late in the day, or in the evening. And he wanted to see the university again.

The grass was green between the paths, and the sunshine flooded the ancient buildings with

light from a cloudless sky. Young men with books beneath their arms were hurrying from their classrooms.

Guardedly Harry looked at the faces of the men he passed. He did not want to be recognized yet; there would be ample time to look up old friends. Now he wanted to be alone, to see and to think unaffected by others. His steps led him past the old granite entrance of University Hall. There he had received his sentence from the dean, a sentence that had altered his life irrevocably. An impulse seized him and he turned up the steps. In the outer office he wrote a few words on his card; some minutes later he was told that the dean would see him.

"I came in," Harry explained, "just to tell you that I appreciate to-day what you did for me when you told me I must leave Harvard. I didn't understand it then, because I didn't understand Harvard or myself. I thought it was just a sort of playground, a place where you spent four pleasant years."

Across the desk the friendly gray eyes watched him: "Please go on. I want to hear it all."

"Now," Harry continued, "I see what Harvard can do if the fellow she is trying to lead



will only give her half a chance. I was a fool. I had a few friends and tried to live in a little idle world. I didn't try to become a part of the life here, and I resented every effort to stir me. I guess I was a pretty fair sample of the worst type of snob, and if I'm not that now it's because you forced me to get out of the world what I would not get out of Harvard."

For a half hour they talked together, and when Harry finally took up his hat to go, the dean walked with him to the door. They shook hands heartily.

"Thank you for coming to see me, Gray. I appreciate it." The dean put a hand on Harry's shoulder. "And I should like to say," he continued, "that I shall think of you hereafter as the kind of a man that Harvard is proud of."

From the hotel he called Ellen on the telephone. "I am coming to see you now," he said. "Perhaps this may be the last time, but you must see me; I have some things to say. May I come now? Will you be alone?"

Her voice was calm, but he detected an agitated indecision in her assent.

The taxicab carried him rapidly through the crowded streets. Through the open windows

came the soft warm air of the peaceful afternoon. He wondered if he might read a favorable omen in the quiet loveliness of the fading day.

Her voice called down to him from the upper hall. "Is that you, Harry?" He wondered if she had expected Clark to call. The thought caused him to smile grimly. "Come up to the library."

She met him at the door, calm, apparently undisturbed. He felt a thrill of admiration for her composure. Beneath this unmoved surface she must be repressing wonderment at his abrupt action. It was only yesterday that he had flung himself from this same room. Did she know of his encounter with Clark?

He drove directly at the subject. "I met Arthur Clark yesterday when I left here. He was on his way to see you. It was he who lied to you about me. He admitted it. I thrashed him."

They had walked to the bay windows, and she stood again as yesterday, facing the west, the sunlight clear upon her. "I know that," she replied.

"You do not love Clark," he continued.

She raised her hand in an appealing gesture, as though she would check further discussion,

but Harry continued: "If you loved him, you would have told him so; you would be now engaged. He has almost convinced you by his persistency, but in your heart you know that what I am telling you is the truth."

"I am not engaged to Arthur. You are right in that."

"Are you going to marry him?"

She flushed hotly. "Is there any reason why you should catechize me?"

"Yes, there is every reason. It is my right."

"I am afraid I can't see that it is."

"I love you. Isn't that reason enough? Isn't it reason enough that I have worked for you and have come back for you? You love me; down deep in your heart, you know it. You shall marry me!"

"I have no intention of marrying any one."

"Not Clark?" he questioned.

"No, I shall not marry him. I have no intention of marrying any one."

She started to sit down, but he caught her by the shoulder. "You must stand while we talk this way." He spoke almost roughly. "I must talk to you as a man talks to another man. And we must talk quickly. Your father will be com-

ing home almost any minute now. I can't be interrupted. Why do you say you have no intention of marrying any one? Why shouldn't you marry?"

"My work."

"Your work!" He gazed at her dumfounded. "Your work," he repeated. "You put an insignificant job ahead of the biggest thing in life?"

She was angry again. "Do you think a girl should idle away her time when she can do something worth while — when she can provide for herself?"

"That isn't the end of life," he retorted. "You are pleased with your success, but your place at the office will be filled again before you are out of the building. You have done a fine thing and done it well, but" — he flushed with resentment — "do you mean to put a miserable job in the scales against my love?" He was very close to her now, but he did not touch her. "I love you — Ellen. For God's sake, be honest. You do love me, don't you, Ellen?"

Her eyes were wet, and the color was gone from her cheeks. He saw her breast rise and fall with emotion.

"Ellen!" He caught her in his arms. Her dark



hair touched his face. "Look at me!" he commanded.

Slowly she lifted her face to his. His arms strengthened about her, and he felt her warm lips against his own. Then suddenly she smothered her face against his breast.

"Ellen," he whispered. "You love me?"

"I love you," she whispered.

THE END

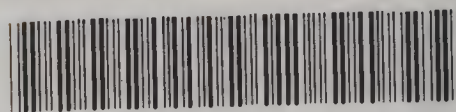




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